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2012 PREVIEW

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- NICKNAMES
- STADIUM VIEWS
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LINDY'S TOP 10

1. LSU
2. USC
3. ALABAMA
4. OKLAHOMA
5. OREGON
6. GEORGIA
7. MICHIGAN
8. FLORIDA STATE
9. ARKANSAS
10. WEST VIRGINIA

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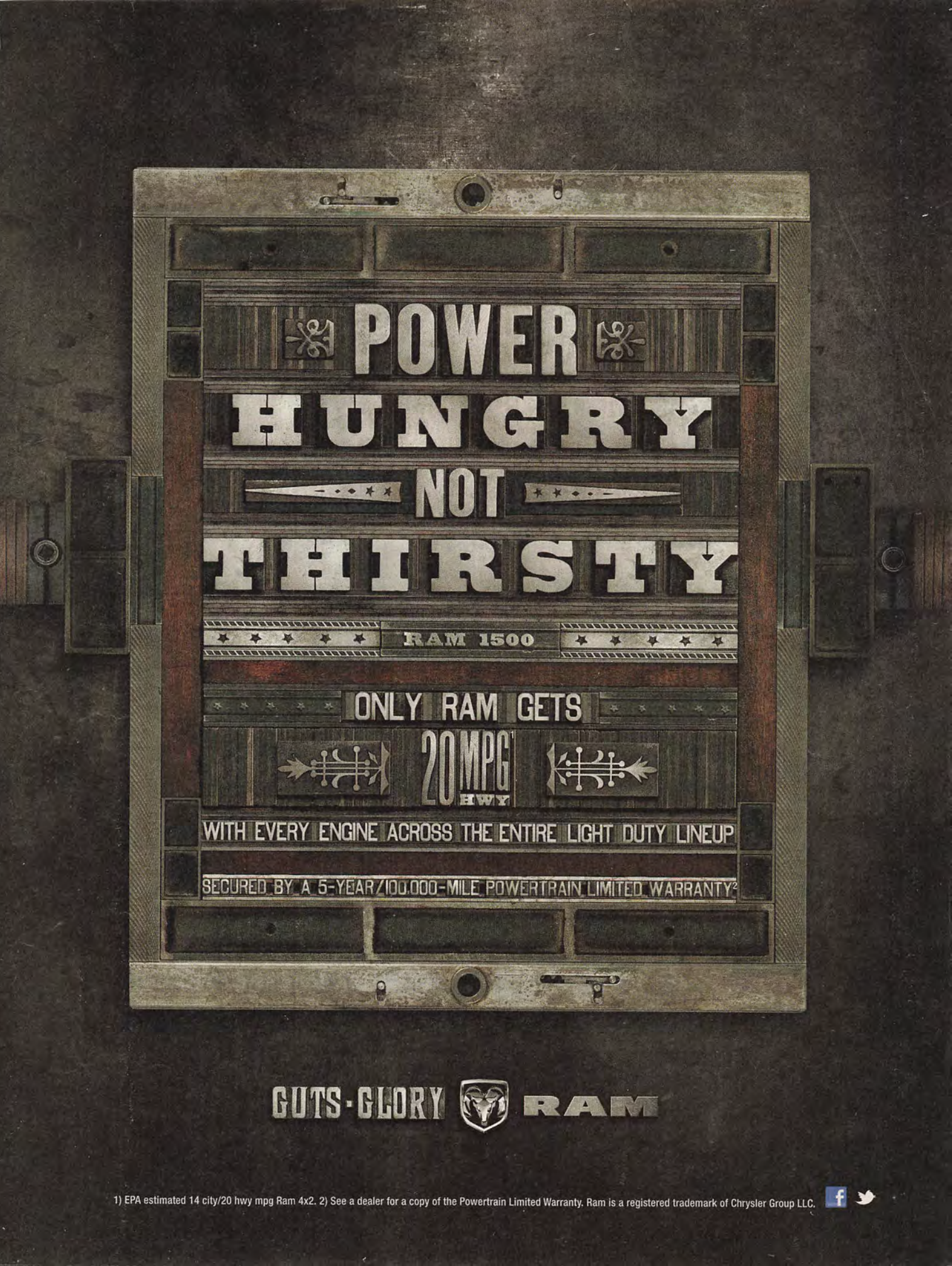

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Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President

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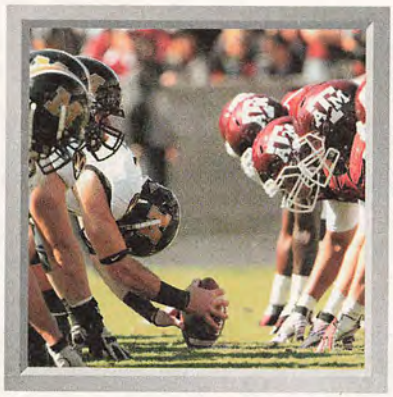

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Letter from the Publisher

Everyone likes a list. The best dressed list, the worst dressed list, etc. Well, *Lindy's* senior editor, Anthony Gimino, and his associates have come up with the ultimate college football lists. I think you will very much enjoy (and possibly disagree with) this feature beginning on page 8.

Scoping the Nation beginning on page 18 — written by Gimino and Dennis Dodd — tells you about all the coaching changes in college football this year. He also gives you a look at the top games of the year and who are the leading Heisman trophy candidates.

Lindy's added a new Mountain West Preview last year and this year has added preseason team issues for Alabama, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State and Texas. You can order them from our website or they will be on the newsstands in those respective states.

Lindy's will also be launching a new and improved website on Aug. 1st of this year. It will feature daily updates and great information to enhance the *Lindy's* brand online. We hope you check it out!

I hope your favorite team has a terrific year. As always, your comments are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lindy Davis Jr.

Lindy Davis

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GIMME FIVE!

For one reason or another, we love lists!

We can't help it. We're suckers for the Big Tease. The "best" this. The "top" that. The "five things that ..." Turns out, we at *Lindy's* have a lot of "best of" lists bumping around our collective noggins — some silly, some substantial, some ... well, some just because. On to the lists ...

Photo by Chris Morrison-US PRESSWIRE

FIVE COACHES WE'D WANT TO DELIVER A PREGAME SPEECH

5. **Will Muschamp** — If you can read lips and body language from the sidelines, you already know why he's on this list.
4. **Brady Hoke** — Sounds like Chris Farley's Matt ("Lives in a van down by the river") Foley from the old SNL sketches. In a good way.
3. **Urban Meyer** — The guy can motivate. Just look at how his teams play.
2. **Nick Saban** — Paint be peeling.
1. **Rich Rodriguez** — West Virginia charm, college gung-ho. Check some of his pregamers on YouTube.

TOP FIVE BCS CHAMPIONS

The 'Canes are still king. Dorsey, Portis, Reed, Shockey, McKinnie, Buchanon, Vilma, Romberg, McDougle, Taylor, Johnson (that would be Andre) ...

5. **2008 Florida**
4. **2004 USC**
3. **2009 Alabama**
2. **2005 Texas**
1. **2001 Miami**

Now, whatever happened to the coach of those Hurricanes ...

FIVE DREAM JOBS FOR TODD GRAHAM

5. **Rice**
4. **Tulsa**
3. **Pittsburgh**
2. **Arizona State**
1. **What's open that pays more?**

5 BEST COLLEGE FOOTBALL MOVIE ROLES

5. **LeAnn Tuohy** *(Sandra Bullock in The Blind Side)* — This mama grizzly proved to be the ultimate Ole Miss booster, snagging the top tackle in team history.
4. **Paul Blake** *(Scott Bakula in Necessary Roughness)* — Kathy Ireland may have looked better in her football tights, but Bakula's resurrected quarterback gets all the laughs.
3. **Bobby Boucher** *(Adam Sandler in the Waterboy)* — What he lacked in simple intelligence, he made up for in ferocity and hydration. Plus, ya know, he loves his mama.
2. **Rudy Ruettiger** *(Sean Astin in Rudy)* — Seriously, try not to cry when he's carried off the field.
1. **George Gipp** *(Ronald Reagan in Knute Rockne All-American)* — In one of the great biopics of its time, Reagan delivers the tour-de-force line: "Win just one for the Gipper."

FIVE BEST LIVE MASCOTS

5. **USC's Traveler** — In 1961, the original rider of Traveler wore Charlton Heston's costume from Ben Hur. No snarky joke here, that's pretty cool.
4. **Auburn's War Eagle** — Much confusion over Auburn's mascot. Is it the Tiger, the team nickname, or the War Eagle, whose pregame flight gets the faithful frothing? Put them in a cage to duke it out. Smart money on the tiger.
3. **Colorado's Ralphie** — The last two Ralphies were provided by Ted Turner; let's hope they fare better than WCW and AOL.
2. **Georgia's UGA** — Continuing a tradition started in 1956, the Bulldogs will debut Uga IX at their first regular-season game. It's like naming a pope, except with dog breath. Uga, not the pope.
1. **Texas' Bevo** — Considered one of the most intimidating mascots in all of sports, but not intimidating enough to deter a group of alumni from proposing that the steer be given neuticles to "increase his masculinity."

Photo by Jody Gomez-US PRESSWIRE

BRYAN BENNETT

Photo by Jason O. Watson-US PRESSWIRE

FIVE BEST QUARTERBACK BATTLES IN THE FALL

5. **Texas** — Mack Brown is maintaining silence on the issue, but it has to be David Ash over Case McCoy, doesn't it?
4. **Florida** — The Gators will keep looking at true sophomores Jacoby Brissett and Jeff Driskel, who is the more mobile of the two. "We can win with both guys," coach Will Muschamp said. Or lose.
3. **Boise State** — Joe Southwick, a junior, is the leader to replace the undrafted Kellen Moore, the winningest QB in college football history. If true freshman Nick Patti, who enrolled early and went through spring ball, wins the job, perhaps he could one day challenge Moore's 50 wins. Sophomore Grant Hedrick and redshirt freshman Jimmy Laughrea are others in the mix.
2. **Notre Dame** — Tommy Rees has the most experience (and an arrest in early May for an incident at an off-campus house party). Andrew Hendrix has the multiple skills to run the spread. Everett Golson is a 6-foot dual threat. And Gunner Kiel is the superstar freshman recruit.
1. **Oregon** — Not so fast on 2011 backup Bryan Bennett stepping in for Darron Thomas. Redshirt freshman Marcus Mariota had the better spring game, showing a Dennis Dixon-like style. The right choice could mean a national championship run.

FIVE NAMES THAT ARE EITHER AN LSU STARTER OR A NEW ORLEANS INTERSECTION

5. **Barkevious Mingo**
4. **Toulouse Decatur**
3. **Tyrann Mathieu**
2. **Royal Iberville**
1. **Tharold Simon**

KIRBY SMART

Photo by Derick E. Hingle-US PRESSWIRE

12 HOTTEST COORDINATORS

12. **Tom Bradley,** *out of football* — Thirty-three years at Penn State has to count for something. Joe Paterno's defensive coordinator was not retained by new coach Bill O'Brien. Someone ought to hire this man, now!
11. **Greg Studrawa,** *offensive coordinator, LSU* — Came up coaching under Urban Meyer at Bowling Green. Forced into OC job last August, Studrawa proved himself a future star after LSU lost Jordan Jefferson.
10. **Bud Foster,** *defensive coordinator, Virginia Tech* — Is the door closing? Foster is 52 and has had plenty of opportunities to leave. His defenses have finished in the top 12 nationally seven out of the last eight years.
9. **Justin Wilcox,** *defensive coordinator, Washington* — Beat the posse out of Tennessee. Should thrive under Steve Sarkisian.
8. **Mick McCall,** *offensive coordinator, Northwestern* — Has three All-Big Ten quarterbacks on his resume. The brains behind one of the best spread option offenses in the country.
7. **Mark Stoops,** *defensive coordinator, Florida State* — The youngest of the Stoops brothers in FBS coaching, Mark's defense improved from 42nd nationally to fourth in 2011.
6. **Mark Helfrich,** *offensive coordinator, Oregon* — How highly thought of is Helfrich at Oregon? For a few precious moments in January, he was the head coach when school officials thought Chip Kelly had gone to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.
5. **Mike Bobo,** *offensive coordinator, Georgia* — Aaron Murray could be Bobo's fourth NFL quarterback.
4. **Dave Yost,** *offensive coordinator, Missouri* — He's 42. He looks 22. Players love him, including national high school Player of the Year Dorial Green-Beckham who Yost recruited. One of the most innovative offense minds will make his bones trying to duplicate Big 12 success in the SEC.
3. **Pat Narduzzi,** *defensive coordinator, Michigan State* — His defense plays like those savage Ds at Miami back in the day.
2. **Manny Diaz,** *defensive coordinator, Texas* — The former ESPN production assistant is an American success story. Now at Texas, his defense figures to lead the resurgent Horns back to the top.
1. **Kirby Smart,** *defensive coordinator, Alabama* — It's obvious Nick Saban has told his defensive coordinator to wait for the right job to come along, because there have been plenty of opportunities. Alabama's defense might as well have been renamed Radio City Music Hall — that's the site of the NFL Draft.

FIVE BEST RIVALRY TROPHIES

5. **The Platypus Trophy** — The Civil War, Oregon vs. Oregon State
4. **The Iron Skillet** — SMU vs. TCU
3. **Paul Bunyan's Axe** — Minnesota vs. Wisconsin
2. **The Jeweled Shillelagh** — USC vs. Notre Dame
1. **Floyd of Rosedale** — Iowa vs. Minnesota

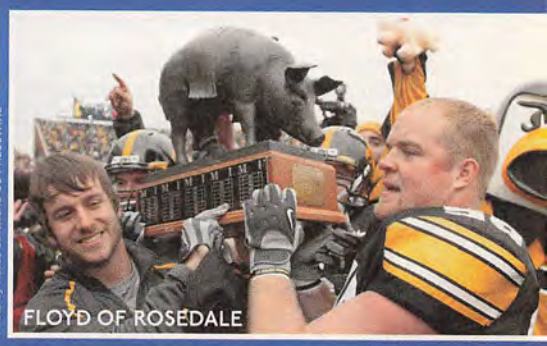

FLOYD OF ROSEDALE

Photo by Reese Strickland-US PRESSWIRE

USC SONG GIRLS

Photo by Kirby Lee/Image of Sport-US PRESSWIRE

FIVE THINGS THAT SHOULD NEVER, EVER GO AWAY

5. **Death Valley at night. Now and forever. (In other words, no more LSU home day games.)**
4. **USC's Song Girls**
3. **The tunnel at the Cotton Bowl in the seconds before Oklahoma-Texas.**
2. **SEC Championship Game weekend.**
1. **The detached voice of Bear Bryant growling, "I ain't nothin' but a winner," during Alabama pregame.**

FIVE MOST IMPRESSIVE OFFSEASON HIRES

5. **Kevin Sumlin,** Texas A&M
4. **Rich Rodriguez,** Arizona
3. **Gus Malzahn,** Arkansas State
2. **Mike Leach,** Washington State
1. **Urban Meyer,** Ohio State

FOUR COACHES WE CAN'T BELIEVE ARE COACHING THERE

These guys once had it all (or least had more than 99.9 percent of folks in their profession). You could throw ex-Nebraska head coach Frank Solich on this list, but we've grown accustomed to his face on the Ohio sideline (going on eight years now!), so he doesn't really count.

4. **Bob Davie.** From Notre Dame to New Mexico.
3. **Terry Bowden.** From an Auburn perfect-o to the Zips of Akron.
2. **Dennis Franchione.** From Ala-freakin'-Bama to Texas State.
1. **Larry Coker.** From 2001 national championship to second-year coach at UT-San Antonio.

FIVE PLAYERS BOUND FOR STARDOM, BASED SOLELY ON THEIR NAME

5. **Mister Cobble, Kentucky** — The Kentucky DT replaces Nick Toon as the next great children's book/television character.
4. **Star Lotulelei, Utah** — The "Star" is short for "Starlite," which is even cooler.
3. **Ego Ferguson, LSU** — It's understandable if stardom goes to the head of the LSU defensive tackle.
2. **Bacarri Rambo, Georgia** — The safety is kicking butt and taking names.
1. **Hendrix Brakefield, Western Kentucky** — The Western Kentucky punter can rock out with the best of them.

FIVE MID-MAJOR COACHES READY TO COACH IN BCS LEAGUES

No Chris Petersen on this list because we're pretty sure he's never going to leave Boise and, besides, he will be coaching in a BCS league (kind of?) in 2013 in the Big East.

5. **Gary Andersen** *(Utah State)* — His career took a wonderful turn in the offseason when the Aggies joined the Mountain West for 2013. The former defensive coordinator for Urban Meyer and Kyle Whittingham is ready to make his statement.
4. **Terry Bowden** *(Akron)* — He had to take the Akron job if he had any hope of returning to the big time.
3. **Mark Hudspeth** *(Louisiana)* — The former Mississippi State assistant led the Cajuns to nine wins in his first season.
2. **Sonny Dykes** *(Louisiana Tech)* — The reigning WAC Coach of the Year traces his roots to Mike Leach and his dad, Spike.
1. **Gus Malzahn** *(Arkansas State)* — His wife's YouTube video went viral — admittedly edited by a Bama fan — costing Gus a shot at North Carolina or Kansas. After a year or two at Arkansas State, look for him to take his first REAL head coaching job in the SEC.

TOP FIVE FOOTBALL PLAYERS OR POLITICAL ICON

5. **Woodrow Hamilton** — Ole Miss lineman or presidential hybrid?
4. **John Simon** — Ohio State defensive end or founder of Virginia?
3. **Johnny Adams** — Founding Father or Michigan State cornerback?
2. **Fitzgerald Toussaint** — Michigan running back or leader of the Haitian revolution?
1. **Andrew Jackson** — Seventh president or Western Kentucky linebacker?

FIVE BEST TRANSFER QBS FOR 2012

5. **Dayne Crist, Kansas** *(Notre Dame transfer)* — Reunited in Lawrence with former Irish coach Charlie Weis, with one year left … Crist, not Weis (we think).
4. **Connor Wood, Colorado** *(Texas)* — Well, maybe. Could be usurped by Kansas transfer Jordan Webb.
3. **Cody Green, Tulsa** *(Nebraska)* — Takes over for productive G.J. Kinne.
2. **Ryan Katz, San Diego State** *(Oregon State)* — His big arm wasn't needed in Corvallis when Sean Mannion emerged, but the Aztecs needed a successor to Ryan Lindley.
1. **Danny O'Brien, Wisconsin** *(Maryland)* — Next stop, Rose Bowl?

BEST VIEWS FROM A STADIUM

5. **Arizona State, Sun Devil Stadium** — So it's hot. Get over it. Those evening mountain-desert vistas are breathtaking.
4. **Michigan, Michigan Stadium** — The sheer spectacle of it all overshadows the traffic and parking issues.
3. **Cal, Memorial Stadium** — From Strawberry Canyon on one side to San Francisco Bay on the other.
2. **Colorado, Folsom Field** — On a clear day, you can see the Flatirons. If CU football seems like it was carved into the side of a mountain, it basically is.
1. **Washington, Husky Stadium** — If you squint and look across Lake Washington you can see Bill Gates' house. Bring a yacht, your favorite Merlot and you might think about getting into the stadium at some point.

BONUS: Michie Stadium, Army — Take a stroll around the U.S. Military Academy campus before an Army game and understand why we're the greatest country in the world. Game day at Michie will restore your faith.

Photo by Evan Habeeb-US PRESSWIRE

FIVE WORST TRENDS

5. **Mis-alignment** — San Diego State in the Big East? You know how those San Diegans love their crabcakes.
4. **College networks** — Let's face it, there's only one that really works. There may be one that EVER works, the Big Ten Network. Maybe streaming sports in HD on the school website is about as good as it gets for most schools.
3. **The hat dance** — Hey, recruits, just sign your letter and fax it in. Ditch the drama. The picking among hats; the press conferences ... it's all more than a little passé. Dial it back.
2. **Coaches gone wild** — You can read this big story in the regional editions of *Lindy's* magazine but, really, have you ever seen the profession more engrossed in money, fame and power?
1. **New uniforms** — It's not just that every school seems to want to channel the Canadian Football League, ruin tradition and our eyesight all at the same time to sell more merch. It's that we care. Somehow these schools have fooled the media and fans into making these "debuts" the equivalent of Fashion Week in Milan. Just turn away, people. It's not worth it.

SEVEN BEST PLAYER NICKNAMES IN COLLEGE FOOTBALL

7. **Sheriff** — Stanford quarterback Brett Nottingham
6. **Teeth** — Washington quarterback Keith Price
5. **Wolfman** — Utah running back John White IV
4. **Belldozer** — Oklahoma quarterback Blake Bell
3. **Shoelace** — Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson
2. **Black Mamba** — Oregon receiver/running back De'Anthony Thomas
1. **Honey Badger** — LSU cornerback Tyrann Mathieu

FIVE SCHOOL NAMES WE'D LIKE TO SEE ACTED OUT AT INTERMISSION

The Ohio State Band is famous for "dotting the I" during its halftime show. What's stopping these schools from doing something similar?

5. Curling of the "S's" of Southern Mississippi
4. Crossing of the Notre Dame "T"
3. Hyphenating of Texas-El Paso
2. Parenthesizing of Miami (Ohio)
1. Ampersand bending of Texas A&M

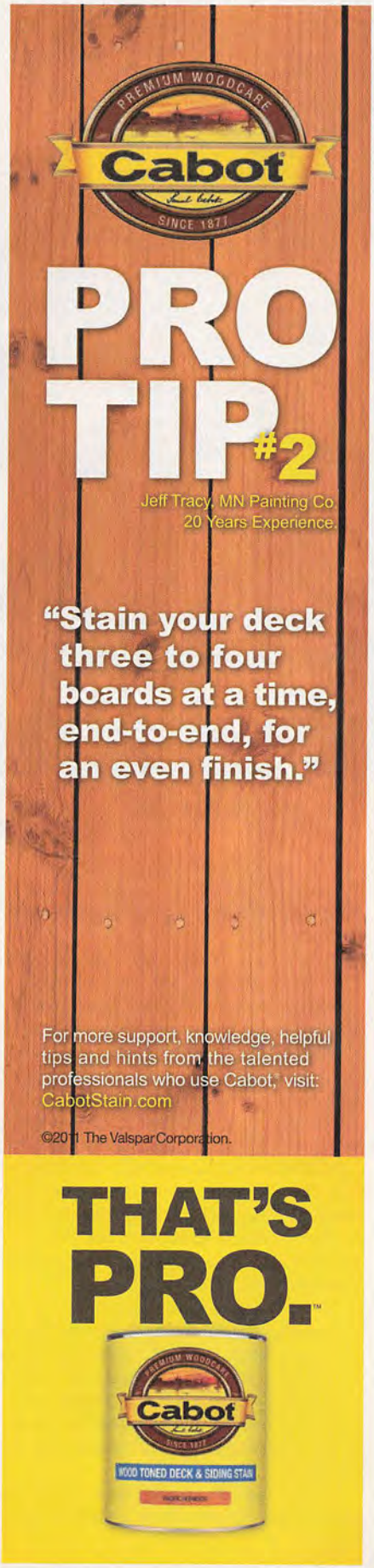
TOP EIGHT FREE-AGENT COACHES

8. **Dan Hawkins** — Believe that his success at Boise means more than his below-.500 crash at Colorado.
7. **Rick Neuheisel** — Star has dimmed since UCLA, but he would still be good in the right fit somewhere west of the Rockies.
6. **Mike Bellotti** — Keep hearing the former Oregon coach wants back in. Just needs the right fit. For whatever reason, that fit wasn't at Arizona, Arizona State or UCLA this offseason.
5. **Tommy Bowden** — He's tanned; he's rested; he's ready. Why won't anyone hire him?
4. **R.C. Slocum** — You know why he's still worth hiring? Look at what Texas A&M has done since he left.
3. **Bobby Petrino** — He'll be back, perhaps by the time you read this. The best two-year stretch at Arkansas in almost 50 years cannot be ignored.
2. **Butch Davis** — See Petrino. He revived Miami after a crippling NCAA probation. He got North Carolina consistent before another crippling probation. Not a bad guy. An excellent coach.
1. **Bill Cowher** — We are contractually obligated to list this name every time the words "out of work coaches" appear together.

FIVE NAMES FOR THE NEW COLLEGE FOOTBALL POSTSEASON

5. Football Four
4. Jerry Jones' Big Fat Family-Style Texas Hoe Down (assuming Cowboys Stadium joins the rotation)
3. The Rose Bowl Sheds A Tear
2. Mutual of Omaha's Wild Football Bowl Championship National Playoffs!
1. March Madness Junior

Anthony Gimino, Dennis Dodd, Jon Gold and Christopher Wuensch contributed to this story.



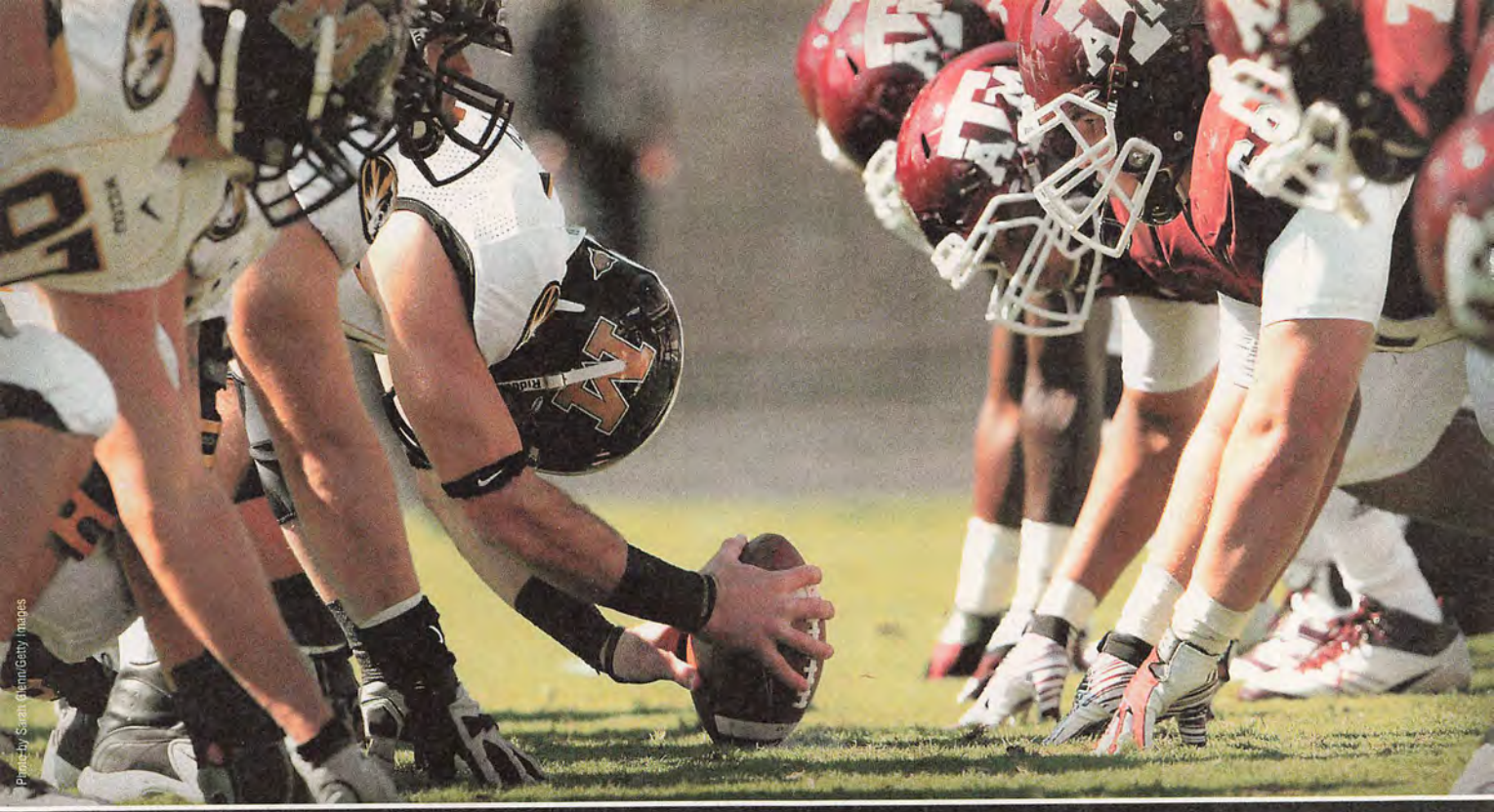


Photo by Susan Glenn/Getty Images

STRENGTH EVERYWHERE CONFERENCE

CAN THE SEC'S NEW WESTERN AND NORTHERN OUTPOSTS KEEP UP?

BY DENNIS DODD

Dixie, meet Show-Me.

Aggie, meet Aubie.

Make room at the tailgate for gumbo *and* toasted ravioli; for fried gator *and* barbeque.

It's time for — as they say in SEC country — big-boy football.

All of it is going to take some getting used to.

But Mike Slive knows how to work a room. In the spring, the 71-year-old SEC commissioner led a congregation in a scene that seemed impossible a year earlier.

This gathering was squeezed into a back room of the Westport Flea Market, a humble eatery in a Kansas City, Mo., entertainment district that traces its roots back to the city's founding. Miles away from whatever Mason-Dixon boundary you'd want to draw.

Slive was speaking before about 300 *Missouri* fans — and they were lapping up whatever sugar-coated frosting the commish was spreading.

They were amazed when told that if current or former SEC athletes competing in the 2008 Olympics would have been a country, the conference would have finished fourth in Beijing. They cackled when Slive said, "You don't schedule your wedding (or) your Bar Mitzvah in the South until you find out what the football schedule is."

They yelled as one when the commissioner completed his revival, er, speech with Missouri's trademark, "M-I-Z ...

"Z-O-U!" they screamed back.

That's one scene of many as Mizzou and Texas A&M transition to the SEC.

To Tiger, Aggie, SEC and college football fans, it's just starting to set in. But what does it mean now that the whirlwind courtship is over?

A&M seems to be a better fit because of its financial and emotional dedication to football. It recruits Louisiana heavily, can renew an old Southwest Conference rivalry with Arkansas and in general seems to tip easily toward the Southeast. Even if it is in the SEC West.

For Missouri (the third "Tigers" in the league), the move seemed to be such a reach when it first came up, that ... well, heading into actual competition, it still feels like a reach.

Photo by Aaron M. Sprecher/Getty Images

This is a school that traces its conference roots back a century to the old Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association which bears genetic markers to today's Big 12. It went kicking and screaming to the SEC, at least in the western side of the state where fans revel in the rivalry with Kansas and an annual basketball appearance at the Big 12 tournament in Kansas City.

That's all gone now.

While A&M has more of that football tradition than Missouri, the once-powerful Aggies haven't won a conference title since 1998. That's also the last time A&M finished in the Top 15. In fact, Mike Sherman was fired as coach in the offseason against the wishes of athletic director Bill Byrne.

There were a lot of Aggies — similar to Missouri — who were against the conference move itself, guided by a small power elite. Their out-front guy was bow-tied A&M president R. Bowen Loftin.

Gone is the rivalry with Texas. With access to SEC recruits — and with the SEC having access to Texas recruits — Aggies everywhere hope the dynamic changes. In a strange way, maybe they can rub it in the face of the Longhorns while playing in a different league.

While A&M takes a step up in competition, so does new coach Kevin Sumlin. The former Aggie assistant got Houston to within an eyelash of a BCS bowl, then pursued his deserved promotion.

Maybe this is his — and their — time.

Sumlin inherits a program that is ninth in the SEC in athletic department expenses directly allocated to football. Missouri is 12th. (Thanks to the *Birmingham News*, which assembled the data based on 2009-2010 figures.)

As far as that SEC culture, A&M immediately becomes tied with Auburn in the conference for No. 1 in all-time major infractions cases (seven).

Sumlin, though, has vowed to remake a program that has grown a bit stale — in facilities, as well as football. CBSSports.com's Bruce Feldman dropped in on a staff meeting earlier this year with Sumlin holding court.

"The reason you guys are here is we gotta do something about the feel of this (football) building," Sumlin told a roomful of key staff and architects.

"This feels old and stiff and cold — everything is dark. I'm always going around flipping on lights. This has to reflect that we have a younger staff. This building should be a tool for teaching and recruiting."

Even during a dip in fortunes, the potential is there. Quarterback Ryan Tannehill materialized as a high NFL draft choice. All five starting offensive linemen return. The tradition of The 12th Man — A&M's undying fan support — will never go away. The SEC is going to have to get used to A&M's Corps of Cadets yell leaders as much as the school is going to have to get used to the SEC.

Photo by Thomas Campbell-US Presswire

Missouri has been content, it seems, being a middle-of-the-road program for most of its history. It hasn't won an outright conference title since 1960. It was ranked No. 1 for a week in 2007 and could have played for a national championship had it beaten Oklahoma in the Big 12 title game. It didn't, and settled for the Cotton Bowl.

The Tigers' last BCS bowl was the Orange in 1970. But they take pride in an upsurge under coach Gary Pinkel. From 2007-2010, Missouri won 40 games. It has been to a school-record seven consecutive bowls. Mizzou has become somewhat of a quarterback factory, pumping out Brad Smith (all-purpose star with Jets, Bills), Chase Daniel (Super Bowl ring with Saints) and Blaine Gabbert (top-10 pick, Jaguars) in recent years.

If nothing had happened in the realignment merry-go-round, Missouri still has never been hotter. Enrollment is booming. The basketball program spent much of the season in the Top 10. The signing of the nation's No. 1 football recruit — Dorial Green-Beckham — sent a couple of messages.

A potential star, sure, but already a sign to the rest of the SEC that Missouri has come to play that big-boy football.

"That was a good day for us," Pinkel said. "It helps our brand name. Going to the SEC, the statement was made. If he's here, almost anybody will look at us. Why would they not?"

It means Pinkel is placing more recruiting emphasis in Georgia and Florida. There will be billboards, direct mail. Lots of direct mail — 30,000 pieces *per week* in the Southeast, Pinkel said, aimed at high school students, coaches and administrators.

The program isn't cutting recruiting ties with the state of Texas, which has sustained Missouri greatly during Pinkel's reign. It is merely repositioning — telling those kids what it is telling everyone: Do you want to play in the best conference around?

Since 2007, Missouri is 48-19 — a better record in that span than Auburn, South Carolina, Arkansas and Georgia. Since 2006, Missouri is one of six BCS schools to win at least eight games each season. The only SEC program on that list is LSU.

The program has been more than competitive with the SEC, going 19-8-1. Its only losing record is against Kentucky and Georgia.

Yes, but big-boy football in the South means enduring birds being flipped at the team bus — or worse. It means humidity and playing against the best defensive linemen in the world. It means a culture shift, one that A&M and Mizzou are going to have to get used to.

"I don't think they (Missouri) fit culturally," said Ethan Rault, an LSU senior from Mandeville, La.

"I don't know if they have a rabid fan base that belongs in the SEC. They don't have enough tradition. I feel like if they join the SEC, they're not going to be competitive at all. They going to be like Vanderbilt. They'll be our new Vanderbilt.

"I like A&M. They belong more," Rault added. "Their culture fits more. They have a more passionate fan base."

Yet, Trammell Coleman, an Auburn fan from Columbus, Ga., said flatly, "A&M's a joke. What do they bring? What value do they have to us? What strengths do they have to bring to us?"

Well, there's the barbeque, for one thing.

Besides, a river runs through the Strength Everywhere Conference — or at least is shared by it. Missouri becomes the seventh SEC state to bump up against the Mississippi River, joining Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and, of course, the other newbie: Texas.

Can we assume a rivalry between the Longhorn Network and a possible SEC Network? The former is a big reason why the Aggies left the Big 12. The latter could become a huge financial windfall for its members.

Either way, SEC programming is about to get a lot more intriguing. Welcome to the South, guys.

Now get ready for your initiation.

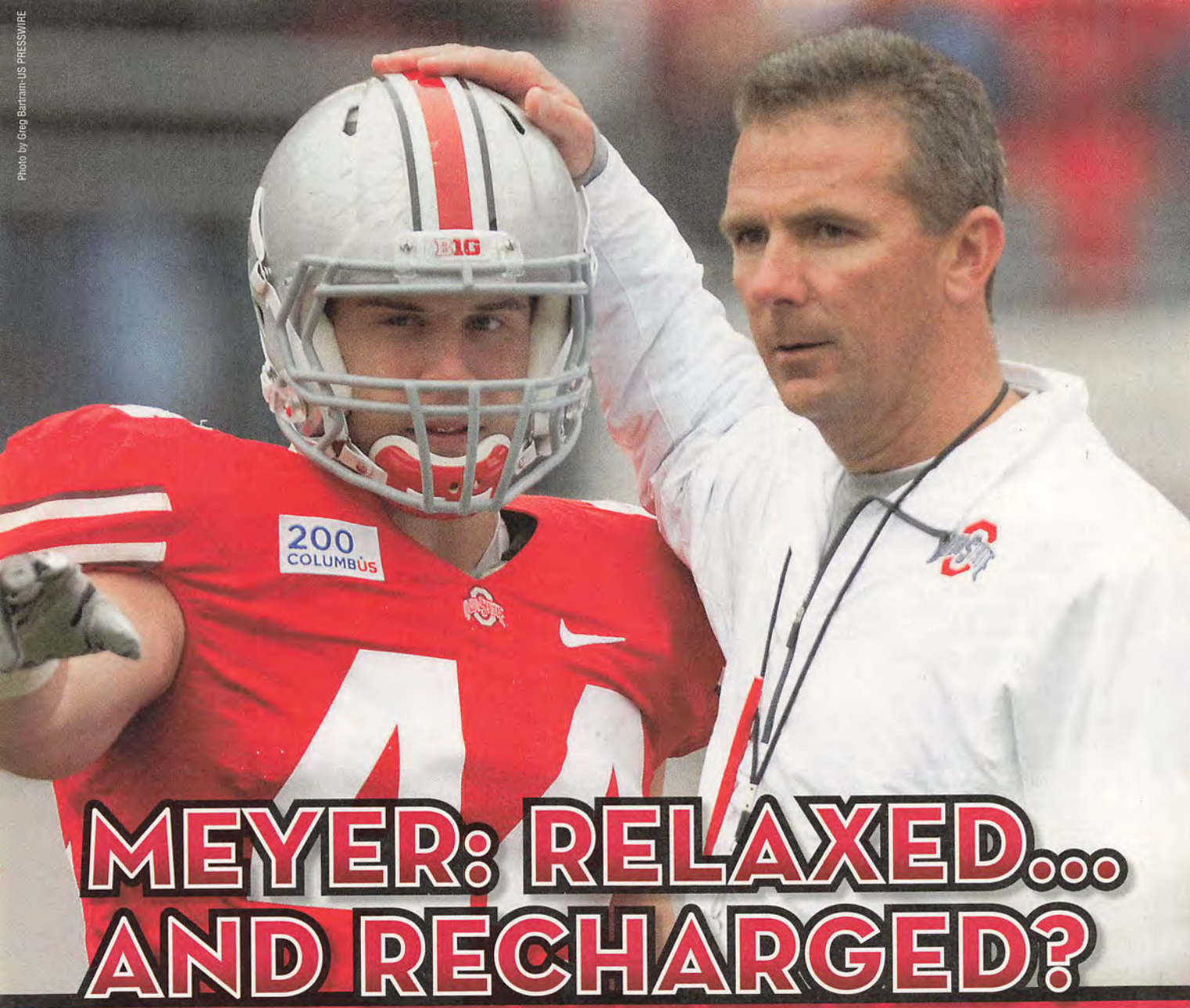


Photo by Greg Bartram-US PRESSWIRE

MEYER: RELAXED... AND RECHARGED?

BUCKEYES HOPE TO BOUNCE BACK AS FAST AS THEIR NEW COACH DID

By Dennis Dodd

Which Urban Meyer is Ohio State getting?

There are different versions, as diverse as a Prius and a Cadillac, Holiday Inn and the Ritz.

Are the Buckeyes getting the reborn Urban, relaxed from at least a few months off from his chosen profession?

Or are they getting the driven, over-the-top championship grinder whose methods were questioned in a riveting offseason story in *The Sporting News*?

Actually, they're getting both. That's what is so fascinating and yet disconcerting about what was the best free-agent coaching name on the market. Ohio State got Meyer on Nov. 28, when they named him to replace interim Luke Fickell. But it doesn't really *know* what it got.

The only certainty — or near certainty — is that Ohio State is going to win. Perhaps win the Big Ten and contend for national championships, depending on how long Meyer stays. That much we know.

The job fits him. But does he still fit the job?

"I didn't think I'd coach this year," Meyer said.

And that's where the story of the road back begins. Life was good. The long-term well-being of the driven 47-year-old wasn't an issue.

He was a dad, a full-time dad again. Even with ESPN analyst work wedged in there, Meyer was seeing daughters Nicki at Georgia Tech and Gigi at Florida Gulf Coast University on a regular basis.

Urban Meyer, coaching legend, had become Urban Meyer, first-base coach for son Nate's travel baseball team.

It got better.

Last spring, Urban and Nate, 13, road-tripped together. Cooperstown. Penn State and Rutgers camps. A Yankees game. They flew in by helicopter with former Rutgers coach Greg Schiano. Nate got to fire an M-4 assault rifle and ride in a Humvee during a trip to West Point. They stayed in Red Blaik's old residence.

"That's probably the best two weeks we

ever had together," Meyer said.

When — to the surprise of no one — he took the Ohio State job, there was a snarky joke going around: Meyer was stepping away from his family to devote more time to football. (See the reversal of terms there?)

"There were a lot of phone calls about other situations," Meyer said of job possibilities. "Maybe two years from now I would go to another job. I was kind of enjoying that part of my life, but I missed it so bad, being at those games."

We kind of knew that. When a guy comes back 24 hours after resigning (see Florida, December 2009), it is assumed that football has a certain tug on his life. And so there he was in late November back in the game — less than a year after leaving Florida the *second* time.

And so here they are, the Buckeyes, beginning both an NCAA probation and the Meyer era.

He'll always have the family memories of 2011, but football has been that mistress that Meyer cannot drop. There are worse places to make a comeback.

He landed in perhaps the nation's best support system for that comeback. The first full-time guy to follow Jim Tressel can coach like few others in the modern game. Also, Meyer has given the term "burnout" a 21st century redefinition.

"After that Sugar Bowl? No, no way," said Ohio State strength coach Mickey Marotti.

The question put to Marotti, one of Meyer's closest confidants, is whether he expected his boss to coach again so soon. On the floor of the Superdome the night of Jan. 2, 2010, Meyer looked gaunt, sickly.

"Awful," Marotti said. "Pants were dragging like he had poop in his drawers."

Urban and his wife Shelley embraced publicly and emotionally at the conclusion of that 51-24 win over Cincinnati. It was more out of relief than celebration. Perhaps the coach has simply traded venues on an incredible stress load.

Marotti, for one, did not expect Meyer back this soon.

"I also know him pretty well," he said. "What else was he going to do? He's a football coach."

The health issues aren't back at this point. The piercing headaches and esophageal spasms were historically stress-induced. Marotti won't hesitate to inject an opinion if he notices the coach boiling over.

For now, diet and dialing it down are simple remedies. Meyer did well to control his emotions when Ohio State was slapped with a one-year bowl ban on Dec. 20. It wasn't easy.

"I've had a couple (of issues) that I probably would have lost my friggin' mind over and went on a rampage," the new Meyer says, alluding to the old Meyer. "I haven't done that. I've taken the Joe Paterno advice. Slow down; don't react. You hear something? Take your time, investigate it, research it."

The old Meyer, says the new Meyer, would have reacted immediately and impetuously — "Woosh" he says, punctuating the point by sweeping his hands through air. Unbearable stress cultivating throughout his career is not an option. The new Meyer says the old Meyer was not ready for the SEC after taking the Florida job in 2005.

The Sporting News story pulled aside a curtain on that old Meyer. The story recounted how Meyer told Ohio State recruit Stefon Diggs that he shouldn't go to Florida because of character issues in the locker room. Those issues, the story summarized, were leftovers from a culture the coach had created.

Former Gator Percy Harvin reportedly attacked former assistant Billy Gonzales and was never disciplined. Gonzales later said the incident never happened.

"Over the last two years he was there," one former player told the publication, "the players had taken complete control of the team."

None of this, it should be noted, has lessened the gushing at Ohio State. He is one of them, an Ohio native. Former Buckeye coach Earle Bruce is a mentor from when Meyer was a grad assistant in Columbus. The 2012 Bucks promise to be stout on defense, but could have issues offensively. There aren't many Harvins — the football-playing type — on that side of the ball.

The bowl ban hit 22 days after he was hired. Meyer and the staff had to go back and re-recruit the guts of a class that was eventually ranked in the top five. Some Big Ten coaches and administrators were upset that Ohio State was given an NCAA waiver to operate with parts of two staffs for a time. In general, Fickell prepared for the bowl game while Meyer recruited.

Wisconsin, in particular, was upset that former Ohio State players in the NFL allegedly were calling recruits. That would be an NCAA violation. Meyer told *Sporting News* and CBSSports.com that the alleged incidents occurred before he was hired and added there were no current NCAA issues.

MEYER'S HEAD COACHING RECORD

Year	School	Record	Final AP Poll
2001	Bowling Green	8-3	NR
2002	Bowling Green	9-3	NR
2003	Utah	10-2	21
2004	Utah	12-0	4
2005	Florida	9-3	12
2006	Florida	13-1	1
2007	Florida	9-4	13
2008	Florida	13-1	1
2009	Florida	13-1	3
2010	Florida	8-5	NR
Totals: 10 Years		**104-23 (.819)**	

What is the message, then, to the innocents left on the roster, especially the seniors, who can't play in a bowl?

"I don't know yet," Meyer said. "I'm really concerned about that part."

If his coaching magic holds, Ohio State could become a modern version of Auburn, 1993. Those Tigers were undefeated but banned by the NCAA from postseason (and television). Ohio State's penalty could invite similar awkwardness in the Big Ten. USC's absence from the first Pac-12 Championship Game due to NCAA sanctions forced an undeserving UCLA to play an uncompetitive game against Oregon.

But if there are only five programs in the country that can survive the tsunami of Tattoogate, Ohio State is one of them. Fans can't wait to see how Meyer's offensive expertise is applied to sophomore quarterback Braxton Miller. Super recruit Noah Spence, a defensive end, could be the cornerstone of another great defense.

We'll see if Ohio State football makes a parallel comeback along with its coach. There is an indelible image of Meyer, the analyst, bounding out of a Michigan State broadcast booth to chat before a game last season. He was reminiscing about the good times with Nate. He was glad to have *gained* 22 pounds. He looked healthy, happy.

Then he said something else before going back to what turned out to be his temporary home behind the microphone. It was going to be a while, but he would coach again someday.

Someday came 43 days later.

Photo by Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

MIKE LEACH

PERSONALITY FACE-LIFT

BY JON GOLD

COACHING CHANGES GIVE THE PAC-12 FOUR SHOTS IN THE ARM

Photo by Stephen Dunn/Getty Images

JIM MORA

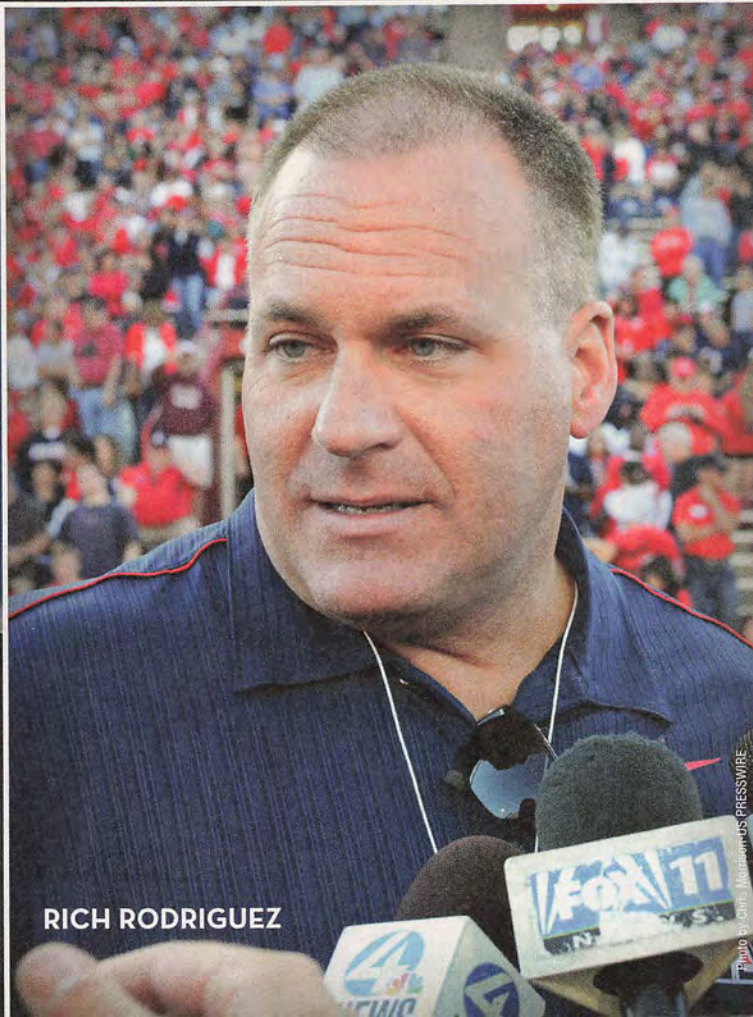


Photo by Chris Morrison/US PRESSWIRE

RICH RODRIGUEZ

When Pete Carroll and Jim Harbaugh left the Pac-10 and bolted for the NFC West in successive years, they did not just take with them their movie-star good looks and championship smiles.

They stole away with their style, their flash and their flair, yanking away a good piece of the league's killer swag, taking *"What's your deal?!"* to the NFL and leaving the Pac-12 to start anew with ... Lane Kiffin? ... David Shaw? ... Jon Embree?

The league had given itself a personality transplant in the wrong direction. Nothing against the three young new guys, but let's face it, these were not legendary or even highly accomplished head coaches, unlike Carroll and Harbaugh.

Granted, Shaw led Stanford to the Fiesta Bowl in his first year. Kiffin led USC through the darkness of a bowl ban. And Embree led CU into the Pac-12.

The Pac-12 needed ... well, something. And the league's facelift in the winter of 2011-12 came just in time, as the conference turned over one-third of its coaching roster.

Blessed with a windfall, thanks to a new television deal that ranks among the most lucrative in college athletics, conference presidents opened their purse strings, buying their football programs' way back into the national sports headlines.

Enter Mike Leach to revive Washington State. And here's Rich Rodriguez to revitalize Arizona. In comes Jim Mora to resuscitate UCLA. And Todd Graham to rejuvenate Arizona State. It remains to be seen if any these guys turn out to be boffo or bozo ... but at least they are *interesting*.

This folks, is once again the rootin', tootin', run-'n'-shootin', fast-talkin', seat-rockin' Wild West.

Hold onto your 10-gallon hats.

"It's an infusion of personality, but more importantly than that, competitive personalities," said Fox Sports college football analyst Petros Papadakis.

"You have Leach, who's just beyond hilarious — like a cartoon ... and Mora, very serious, NFL demeanor. A guy like Todd Graham, who doesn't even allow swearing at Arizona State ... and RichRod, who's a blast."

The infusion of personality was important at each of the schools in need of a coaching change. Arizona and Washington State needed shots in the arm. UCLA and Arizona State needed slaps in the face.

As far as the conference was concerned, we needed somebody to keep folks from dozing off at the conference media days when Chip Kelly wasn't at the dais.

The Wildcats and Cougars pounced early, announcing the hires of Rodriguez and Leach just over a week apart in late November, getting a jump on the coaching carousel.

Practitioners of two of the highest-powered offenses of the 2000s — in totally different ways — the two instantly had fans dreaming of shimmering scoreboards. The Pirate and RichRod barely need introductions: Sure, they were available for a reason, but there are very strong sides to their stories, too.

TODD GRAHAM

Photo by Christian Petersen/Getty Images

These guys can recruit, they can coach, and WSU and Arizona are thrilled to have them. Look at it this way: Not long ago, it was inconceivable that Pullman and Tucson would be the 2012 addresses of such well-known, highly successful coaches ... at least in football.

For the most part, Paul Wulff and Mike Stoops were guys who these programs were OK with, unless the athletics directors could bring in some heavy hitters, which is exactly what they did.

UCLA and Arizona State, meanwhile, needed toughening up. After a four-year run packed with off-field incidents and on-field chaos under Neuheisel, athletic director Dan Guerrero went away from Bruin bloodlines for the first time in a half-century in hiring Mora.

Moving to the college game for the first time after 25 years in the NFL, Mora brought some of the pro game's demands with him, insisting on higher assistant coaches salaries and facilities upgrades, as well as the program's first football-dedicated strength and conditioning coach (Sal Alosi).

Then he went and assembled a staff of no-nonsense, fiery young coaches, swiping offensive coordinator Noel Mazzone and running backs coach Steve Broussard from Arizona State, and defensive backs coach Demetrice Martin from Washington.

Arizona State similarly had become an undisciplined lot under Dennis Erickson — Vontaze Burfict, anyone? — and in giving way to Graham, the Sun Devils clearly are calling for a commitment to focus and intensity.

OK, so Graham burned some bridges by using pitstops at Tulsa and Pittsburgh to punch his transfer ticket to Tempe, but he's shown some coaching acumen along the way.

Unlike their predecessors, both Mora and Graham have earned their reputations as defense-first coaches.

"It has a lot to do with going out and creating your own program," CBS college football analyst Bruce Feldman said. "You look for what you don't have. Very seldom do you see someone fire a defensive guy, and bring in defensive guy."

This round of hires, though, wasn't only about addressing a perceived weakness. It was about proving to the big boys around the country that the Pac-12 was ready to compete for high-profile coaches.

"If it's a vanilla league, you can get lost in it all," Feldman said. "It happens in a lot of ways — it doesn't mean you can't recruit with low-key personalities. But programs embrace a personality, and it does unify things, gives something to grab onto.

"You look at the SEC — it's a room full of caricatures — and a lot of those guys have a presence to them, a persona.

"If you look like you're apathetic, you get lost in the margins. Other people define you just as quick as that. That's a risk."

Pac-12 presidents decided it was a risk they couldn't take, so they pulled the trigger.

And the Wild West is back.

Illustration by Tim Williams

USC vs. MICHIGAN
For the good of the game?

BY ANTHONY GIMINO AND DENNIS DODD

THE SEC IS JUST TOO DOMINANT FOR THE REST OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL

What this college football season needs is a bolt of lightning. Or two. Actually, it might take a whole bucket full.

Because the way the SEC has had its way with the rest of college football lately, it's getting monotonous.

For everyone outside the SEC, the end of the college football season has turned into a horror story. Fans in the Midwest, Pacific Coast, Southwest and Northeast have been left shivering around a campfire listening to Nick Saban, with a flashlight under his chin, telling spooky tales of 300-pound defensive tackles who run like linebackers and suck the souls of opposing quarterbacks.

The SEC dominance, while profound, is getting old. It's time for the rest of college football to start shining its light.

The whole of college football needs the best conference in college football to punch each other out. This year, we need a bunch of two-loss SEC teams.

That the SEC has won six consecutive national titles is just great for the SEC, especially the state of Alabama. Good for the league. Well played. God bless.

Face it: That two SEC teams — LSU and Alabama — held a rematch in last year's national championship game wasn't so wonderful for the big picture. It resulted in the third-lowest TV ratings in the 14 years of the BCS and was a relative yawner of a game, a defensive slog.

Instead, picture a season in which Alabama beats LSU, Arkansas beats Alabama, Florida beats Georgia, South Carolina beats Florida ... you get the idea. The in-conference wreckage would be just enough that two teams from other conferences could stroll to Miami for the BCS Championship Game without having to fear LSU or Alabama or any of those other unbeatable SEC teams.

You know, something like USC vs. Michigan.

Those traditions. Those fan bases. Those quarterbacks. Those helmets. Those comeback stories — Michigan from its internal demons

of the Rich Rodriguez "era;" USC from its messy post-Pete Carroll transition.

Michigan, the winningest program in college football history, has never played in one of these BCS title games. The Trojans won one (just ask them), but the record book doesn't show it because it was vacated due to sanctions. Now, they are re-emerging from two years in lockup, as LA-sexy as ever.

Sorry, SEC. That matchup sounds like a double-shot of adrenaline compared to more yawn-twins from the land of smashmouth.

We get it. The SEC is the best. It will, indisputably, collectively, be the very best conference again this year. Bigger *and* better. But we can dream of some new blood, can't we?

At least we can until the first week of the season when, in Dallas, in Jerry Jones' man-cave, Michigan opens against ... Alabama.

CONFERENCE REALIGNMENT

Seven of the 11 conferences have a different look this season, including the addition of four programs to the Football Bowl Subdivision.

College football is about at halftime of the whole realignment movement.

Last season saw the expansion of the Pac-10 and Big Ten (as well as shuffling in the Mountain West and WAC). And we're still waiting for the final shoes to drop on ACC expansion (Pitt, Syracuse) and the ensuing waves of change that will lead to a geographically incongruent Big East (Boise State, San Diego State, Houston, SMU, etc.) and new looks for Conference USA and the Mountain West.

But, hey, one year at a time. For this year, here is how realignment affects your conference standings for 2012:

SEC (14 teams, 2 divisions)
In: Missouri (East), Texas A&M (West)

Big 12 (10 teams, no divisions)
In: TCU, West Virginia
Out: Missouri, Texas A&M

Big East (8 teams)
In: Temple **Out:** West Virginia

MAC (13 teams, 2 divisions)
In: UMass (East) **Out:** Temple

MWC (10 teams)
In: Fresno State, Hawaii, Nevada **Out:** TCU

Sun Belt (10 teams)
In: South Alabama

WAC (7 teams, no divisions)
In: Texas-San Antonio, Texas State
Out: Fresno State, Hawaii, Nevada

BCS MATCHUPS

The BCS National Championship Game heads to Miami. Here's how *Lindy's* sees the biggest games shaking out this season:

ROSE BOWL
TUESDAY, JAN. 1
PASADENA, CALIF. * ROSE BOWL
BIG TEN #1 VS. PAC-12 #1
LINDY'S PICK: MICHIGAN VS. OREGON

ORANGE BOWL
TUESDAY, JAN. 1
MIAMI * SUN LIFE STADIUM
ACC #1 VS. BCS AT-LARGE
LINDY'S PICK: FLORIDA STATE VS. LOUISVILLE

SUGAR BOWL
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 2
NEW ORLEANS, LA. * LOUISIANA SUPERDOME
SEC #1 VS. BCS AT-LARGE
LINDY'S PICK: ALABAMA VS. WEST VIRGINIA

FIESTA BOWL
THURSDAY, JAN. 3
GLENDALE, ARIZ. * UNIV. OF PHOENIX STADIUM
BIG 12 #1 VS. BCS AT-LARGE
LINDY'S PICK: OKLAHOMA VS. MICHIGAN STATE

BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME
MONDAY, JAN. 7
MIAMI * SUN LIFE STADIUM
BCS #1 VS. BCS #2
LINDY'S PICK: LSU VS. USC

HEISMAN WATCH

There is always a certain logic to handicapping the Heisman race in the preseason. Quarterback; Top 10 team; name recognition — they're the holy trinity of Heisman indicators.

Funny how the past three years have made pretzels out of our logic.

- Alabama running back Mark Ingram? Oh, he was a nice time-share running back ...
- Cam Newton? Merely a junior college transfer taking over an Auburn team that had lost five of its last eight games in 2009.
- Robert Griffin III? A Heisman winner at Baylor? Hahahahaha ...

In the age of constant highlights, we can't really be sure of anything anymore in the Heisman race, although we'll stick with as much logic as we can muster for now. Here are 10 players who, out of the gate, have the best shot:

1. Matt Barkley, QB, USC — All he has to do is match his numbers from last season (3,528 yards, 39 touchdowns) and get the Trojans to the BCS national title game (oh, is that all?) ... and the stiff-armed trophy is his.

2. Denard Robinson, QB, Michigan — Four of the past six Heisman winners have been dual-threat quarterbacks (Troy Smith, Tim Tebow, Newton, RG III). Robinson fits the bill, even as Michigan tries to squeeze more passing out of its attack. (Let him run, Brady!)

3. Montee Ball, RB, Wisconsin — Only one running back has won the Heisman this millennium (Ingram in 2009, when he benefitted from a championship team and a modest cast of competitors). For Ball to win, he just might have to get past 2,000 yards ... which he came within one long run of doing last season when he hit 1,923.

4. Geno Smith, QB, West Virginia — He's playing in a Dana Holgorsen-designed offense, so his numbers will rate with anybody in the nation. But he's not just a product of the system.

5. Landry Jones, QB, Oklahoma — Had one of the least memorable seasons for someone who passed for nearly 4,500 yards and 29 touchdowns. It's just that Jones' sophomore year was statistically superior, and the Sooners didn't live up to 2011's preseason No. 1 billing. Perhaps this is the year.

6. Tyrann Mathieu, DB/RET, LSU — The combination of "Badger Plays," his return game and a team poised to be on the biggest stage give Mathieu more Heisman hope than just your regular star defender. Besides, he got to New York last year, so his name recognition is huge.

7. De'Anthony Thomas, RB/WR, Oregon — Chip Kelly is no dummy. Whether he deploys Thomas more as a running back or receiver (plus returner), the sophomore is going to get all the touches he can handle, which means he will provide as many thrills as anyone in the country.

8. Marcus Lattimore, RB, South Carolina — This all spins on the health of his knee coming back from ACL surgery and if he can hold up for 12 punishing regular-season games. If so, his ceiling is as high as any.

9. Aaron Murray, QB, Georgia — The SEC's best quarterback, and the Bulldogs have a sneaky-good feel about them this season. (Hey, that's what we wrote about Murray last year, too!)

10. Tyler Wilson, QB, Arkansas — No, wait. Wilson is the best quarterback in the SEC! We'll see how it all plays out, but his QB rival at Georgia has a better shot at winning his division, which counts for something. SEC quarterbacks have won two of the past five Heismans.

FEBRUARY CHAMPIONS

Rivals.com assigns a point total to each of the school's recruiting classes every year, but a team can't be great based on just one recruiting class. Who's done it the best for five years? Let's add up all those points and see the answer.

OK, big shock: Alabama's Nick Saban. He has two national titles to show for it, and it would be no surprise if more are on the way. But celebrating on Signing Day is only part of the winning equation.

Be careful what you brag about. Nine of the top 15 teams in this recruiting snapshot have had at least one losing season in the past five years (and another, USC, is coming off a two-year postseason ban).

Here are the best recruiting teams of the past five years:

TEAM	POINTS
1. Alabama	13,183
2. USC	12,080
3. Florida	11,827
4. Texas	11,825
5. Florida State	10,986
6. LSU	10,761
7. Ohio State	10,602
8. Oklahoma	10,124
9. Georgia	10,039
10. Auburn	9,564
11. Michigan	9,269
12. Miami	8,612
13. Clemson	8,536
14. UCLA	8,148
15. Tennessee	8,144

(**Editor's note:** *Don't ask what the points mean ... it's too complicated!*)

RULE CHANGES FOR 2012

The change that most affects the game comes on kickoffs, in an effort to decrease what is considered the most dangerous play in football.

The NCAA moved up the spot where toe meets leather from the 30- to the 35-yard line, making it easier for kickers to reach the end zone, thereby increasing touchbacks and reducing the high-speed, injury-causing collisions.

At the same time, returners are encouraged to take a knee in the end zone, since offenses will now begin possession on the

25 instead of the 20.

While some coaches will be content to take the touchback, others might strategize. A high kick near the goal line might often result in a tackle inside the 25. Is it worth the risk? We'll see how coaches play this.

Elsewhere, there is new regulation for blocking below the waist and a banning of leaping over the punt protection shield. One new rule that will be noticed is that a player must miss a snap if he loses his helmet during a play.

STOP THE RUN!

We're not here to tell you that stopping the run is the most important ingredient in having a championship team, because you know that. (Turnover margin is a close second.) But here are some numbers that back it up.

- Two of the past 10 national champs have led the nation in rushing defense.
- Half of the title teams in the past 10 years ranked in the national top three against the run.
- Only one champion — 2005 Texas — ranked worse than 15th nationally against the run, and that Longhorns team had Vince Young to score as many as needed.

National Champions:Rushing Defense

Year	Champion	Rank	YPG
2011	Alabama	1	72.2
2010	Auburn	9	109.1
2009	Alabama	2	78.1
2008	Florida	15	105.4
2007	LSU	12	106.1
2006	Florida	5	72.5
2005	Texas	33	130.9
2004	USC	1	79.4
2003	LSU	3	67.0
2002	Ohio State	3	77.7

What does it mean for this season? If you really like a team against the run, you might want to head to Vegas. We recommend checking out our list of the top 10 defensive lines in the country elsewhere in the magazine.

Illustration by Tim Williams

THE TWEET LIFE

When Arizona athletic director Greg Byrne fired Mike Stoops at midseason, he and his marketing staff set out a strategy to unveil whoever became the next head coach. That plan included top-level secrecy and breaking the news via Twitter.

Welcome to football/life/technology/social media in 2012.

Byrne followed through on the idea, improved upon after a suggestion from his wife, Regina.

"We were flying into the Detroit airport to pick up Coach (Rich) Rodriguez and his family and I asked her, 'What should I put in the tweet?'" Byrne said. "And it was her idea to use a picture."

So Regina snapped a picture of her husband with the Rodriguez family, and Byrne tweeted: "And the new Arizona football coach and his family is....." with a link to a photo. As of late April, that photo had been viewed more than 68,000 times.

It is believed to be the first major coaching hire announced via Twitter, and it surely isn't going to be the last.

Whether it's hirings and firings, recruiting news, injury updates, practice reports, press conference ramblings or in-game reports, fans and media alike are twitcuffed to their smartphones. The fullest experience of being a college football fan is waiting on Twitter — with players, schools, reporters and, *ahem*, the staff of venerable preseason magazines offering an overload of information.

Some of it valuable.

- Twitter was the only place for immediate and unfiltered reaction from Pitt players when Todd Graham bolted for Arizona State after only one season. Several Panthers, feeling burned by the coach's sudden departure, took to their Twitter accounts, including defensive end Brandon Lindsey, who wrote: "For someone who said they read the Bible everyday, he must've missed the pg that said 'thou shall not lie.'"
- Mississippi State painted a Twitter hashtag — #HAILSTATE — in one of its endzones for last year's game against Ole Miss. Michigan and Arkansas followed suit with promotional hashtags on their fields for their spring games.
- As of late April, Matt Barkley — *Lindy's* preseason Offensive Player of the Year — had more than 53,000 followers. That's a start. Our preseason Defensive Player of the Year, Tyrann Mathieu, had close to a staggering 115,000.

Get on board ... or get left behind.

"It's just the reality of the world we're in that news and information is going to break on Twitter, so who's going to be the one to break it?" Byrne said.

The breaking news is nice — for example, Notre Dame announced with a tweet this spring that defensive end Aaron Lynch was transferring — but athletic departments everywhere are wary of TMI — too much information.

Compliance staffs are monitoring athlete's accounts for offensive comments — Michigan pulled its scholarship offer from four-star cornerback Yuri Wright after a series of foul tweets this winter — while educating players and boosters about improper contact with recruits. Notre Dame tight end Tyler Eifert ran afoul of the NCAA rule book when he mentioned a recruit's official campus visit on his Twitter account.

"Getting your arms around it completely is easier said than done," Byrne said. "We set guidelines for our athletes and I tell them, 'Just imagine that whatever you put on your account will end on the ESPN ticker.' That registers with some more than others."

Purdue coach Danny Hope scoffed at the use of Twitter this spring, saying, "To me, tweeting is a lot like keeping a diary. Back in the day, men didn't keep diaries to share our secrets, so I don't get the Twitter thing."

COACHING CHANGES

Given who has returned to the sidelines this fall, 2012 in college football is the Year of the Comeback Coaches.

Six guys who spent time out of the major college game are back for another go in careers that have featured some high peaks.

Urban Meyer and Rich Rodriguez won 10 games multiple times and hope to reprise that success in new locales. The others — Terry Bowden, Mike Leach, Bob Davie and Charlie Weis — also had moments of greatness and are back at it.

Add former NFL head coach Jim Mora Jr., and that's seven noteworthy names to jump all at once right back into the fray.

The coming season also affords some former offensive "gurus" the chance to show that their acumen stretches beyond the coordinator's office. Norm Chow, Paul Chryst, Jim McElwain and Gus Malzahn will undoubtedly find new challenges now that they are responsible for whole football teams.

Fourteen of the 27 jobs that changed hands came in the six BCS automatic-qualifying conferences, including four in the Pacific 12 and three apiece in the Big Ten and SEC.

Of course, the roster of college head coaches lacks the name Joe Paterno for the first time in 47 years. Following his removal at Penn State in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky scandal, Paterno died in January after a short battle with lung cancer.

Also not coaching this fall, for a variety of reasons, are former sideline fixtures Bobby Petrino, Howard Schnellenberger, Pat Hill, Ron Zook, Houston Nutt and Rick Neuheisel.

Akron

Out: Rob Ianello | **In:** Terry Bowden

Bowden ended a 10-year hiatus from coaching in 2009 when he left a broadcasting career to take over at Division II North Alabama. Three playoff appearances later, he earned the surprise hire at Akron, which hasn't had a winning season since 2005 and was 2-22 in Ianello's only two seasons. The Zips have fantastic facilities, and Bowden has a fertile recruiting ground in Northeast Ohio, which has given birth to unwavering optimism with their goofy kangaroo mascot ... and new T-shirts that read, "Fear the Dadgum Roo."

Arizona

Out: Mike Stoops | **In:** Rich Rodriguez

The Wildcats hope the classic "polar opposite" hire can eventually get them to their first Rose Bowl. Out goes Stoops, a defensive specialist with little public presence, and in comes the glad-handing RichRod, with his flashy offense. Rodriguez's defense couldn't stop anyone at Michigan, but this time he convinced his former West Virginia coordinator, Jeff Casteel, to come along for the ride and install his 3-3-5 scheme.

Arizona State

Out: Dennis Erickson | **In:** Todd Graham

After the Sun Devils reportedly put so much of their eggs in Kevin Sumlin's basket, it took them a while to figure out what to do after Sumlin went instead to Texas A&M. Rich Rodriguez's former linebackers coach at West Virginia, Graham had spent 11 months in Pittsburgh, where the Panthers went 6-6. Comically, he was quoted as calling three of his assistants who left for Rodriguez's staff "nothing but mercenaries," and two weeks later left for ASU to go head-up with those guys. He will be leading his fourth team in seven seasons (Rice, Tulsa, Pitt, ASU).

Arkansas

Out: Bobby Petrino | **In:** John L. Smith

Petrino's 21-5 record the past two seasons and the return of quarterback Tyler Wilson and running back Knile Davis, among many others, had Hog fans thinking BCS title. Then he had to go for a Sunday-afternoon motorcycle ride and the whole thing came crashing down in a scandal that harkens to another Arkansan and a previous, uh, personal shortcoming (that one was in the White House).

Arkansas State

Out: Hugh Freeze | **In:** Gus Malzahn

The most head-scratching job change of the offseason belongs to Malzahn, who was making $1.3 million as Auburn's offensive coordinator before taking a half-million-dollar pay cut to take over the Red Wolves, who got to go to the GoDaddy.com Bowl as a reward for a 10-win season last year. Coach Hugh Freeze's reward for his one year at ASU was a rich contract at Ole Miss. If Malzahn had any second thoughts over his decision, they probably multiplied when Bobby Petrino melted down at Arkansas. That could have been Malzahn's job, if only the timing were different.

Colorado State

Out: Steve Fairchild | **In:** Jim McElwain

Colorado State put up $6.5 million and a five-year deal to grab McElwain away from Alabama, where the Tide won two BCS titles in his three years as offensive coordinator. Moving to Fort Collins is a nice move for the Missoula, Mont., native, who played at Eastern Washington, coached at EWU and Montana State, spent a year on Art Shell's staff with the Oakland Raiders, and was the offensive coordinator at Fresno State when Nick Saban called in 2008. He won't have much pressure immediately, given the Rams' 3-9 marks in each of the past three years.

Florida Atlantic

Out: Howard Schnellenberger | **In:** Carl Pelini

Bo Pelini's big brother gets his chance as a head coach. Schnellenberger deserved better than a 1-11 farewell in the final season of a sterling career that saw him recruit Joe Namath to Alabama to play for Bear Bryant, start the Miami dynasty with freshman QB Bernie Kosar, win a national title in 1983 and take Louisville to a Fiesta Bowl. He shepherded FAU into Division I and built the 30,000-seat stadium that Pelini will try to fill.

Fresno State

Out: Pat Hill | **In:** Tim DeRuyter

Hill took Fresno State to the precipice by "playing anybody, anytime, anywhere," but could never quite get the Bulldogs over the top. Still, it was a shock when FSU canned him following 11 bowl games in 15 seasons. DeRuyter, a Californian who

spent the past two years as Texas A&M's defensive coordinator, faces a challenge duplicating Hill's 112-80 record. But bettering Hill's 40-41 mark over his final seven seasons is definitely do-able.

Hawaii

Out: Greg McMackin | **In:** Norm Chow

It took five schools, four decades and three national championships as a college assistant before Chow finally became a head coach. A native Hawaiian, Chow is a natural fit for the Warriors, who have seen declining attendance even though the "retiring" McMackin had led two bowl trips in his four years. Chow's first game will be at the L.A. Coliseum, where he helped Pete Carroll and USC win a pair of national championships.

Houston

Out: Kevin Sumlin | **In:** Tony Levine

If Levine's first season goes anything like his first game, Houston will look savvy for promoting him from assistant head coach to take over when Sumlin left for Texas A&M. The Cougars responded with a 30-14 win over Penn State in the Ticket City Bowl. Now we'll see if Levine, who's been a part of 35 Houston wins in four seasons as an assistant, can win without Case Keenum.

Illinois

Out: Ron Zook | **In:** Tim Beckman

Midway through the 2011 season, Illinois was 6-0 and fireronzook.com was being laughed at. But the original "fireyourcoach website" had the last laugh, as the Illini stumbled through a six-game losing streak and Zook was finally fired. Beckman, meantime, rescued Toledo from the dregs and a point-shaving scandal to go 21-16 in three seasons, with two bowl games. Not the most exciting hire, but the Mid-American Conference to Big Ten highway has been successful for some in the past.

Kansas

Out: Turner Gill | **In:** Charlie Weis

Weis didn't seem to like Kansas very much two years ago when he worked for the Chiefs, but he injected himself into the Jayhawks' search late and came away with the job. He'll try to dig out from a 5-19 mark in Turner Gill's two seasons. Count the people of South Bend skeptical, given Weis' steady decline over a five-year stay at Notre Dame. Gill was hired as head coach at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University.

Memphis

Out: Larry Porter | **In:** Justin Fuente

After coaching with Les Miles at Oklahoma State and LSU, Porter got his first head coaching job ... and went 1-11 and 2-10 before the former Memphis Tigers running back was fired after only two years. So, as Porter becomes running backs coach at Arizona State, there's no high bar for Fuente to scale. He served as Texas Christian's co-offensive coordinator last season. He'll have to get busy quickly in order to have Memphis ready for a move to the Big East next year.

New Mexico

Out: Mike Locksley | **In:** Bob Davie

Locksley struggled through off-field controversy in Albuquerque and never built on the promise he showed either as a recruiter and assistant at Illinois, when the Illini made it to the Rose Bowl. He was fired midseason, and the Lobos had a chance to fully assess Davie as a candidate. They hope he is re-energized after a decade away from the sideline (and mostly in the ESPN broadcast booth) since his firing at Notre Dame, where he had two nine-win seasons in five years, including one BCS bowl. Davie, remember, built his reputation with the "Wrecking Crew" defense at Texas A&M in the 1990s.

North Carolina

Out: Butch Davis/Everett Withers
In: Larry Fedora

Davis got the boot just before the 2011 season, leaving the Tar Heels in a bad spot — but not as bad as forfeiting all of their wins from 2008 and 2009, when Davis used ineligible players. Although not directly

CAREER COACHING VICTORIES

For years we tracked the chase between Florida State's Bobby Bowden and Penn State's Joe Paterno to be the winningest coach in major college football. Paterno got there first, beating Ohio State in 2001 to eclipse Bear Bryant's 323 wins.

JoePa just kept on going for another decade, working the sideline (or the press box) two years after Bowden had retired, reaching a record of 409-136-3 when the Nittany Lions beat Illinois on Oct. 29. That would be his last game, fired amid the scandal involving former Penn State assistant Jerry Sandusky. Paterno, 85, died in January after battling lung cancer.

John Gagliardi, still coaching at Division III power St. John's at the age of 85, holds the all-time coaching mark with a record of 484-133-11 in an astounding 63 seasons. As for the FBS level, nobody is within 150 victories of JoePa.

Virginia Tech's Frank Beamer is the new No. 1 with 251 wins. He and Mack Brown are the current standards for longevity and success at the highest level, each having advanced to bowls in 19 of the past 20 seasons.

Brown is under contract through the 2020 season, when he would be pushing 70. Even if he averages 10 wins in the next nine seasons, he'd still be 92 victories behind Paterno.

Here are the winningest coaches in the FBS (not all these victories came at the major college level, but we're counting them all):

NO.	COACH, CURRENT TEAM	YEARS	AGE	W-L-T	PCT.
1.	Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech	31	65	251-120-4	67.5
2.	Mack Brown, Texas	28	61	227-113-1	66.7
3.	Chris Ault, Nevada	27	65	226-103-1	68.6
4.	Steve Spurrier, South Carolina	22	67	197-75-2	72.3
5.	Dennis Franchione, Texas State	26	61	193-107-2	64.2
6.	Brian Kelly, Notre Dame	21	50	187-67-2	73.4
7.	Mike Price, UTEP	30	66	174-174-0	50.0
8.	Larry Blakeney, Troy	21	64	164-91-1	64.1
9.	Bill Snyder, Kansas State	20	72	159-83-1	65.8
10.	Gary Pinkel, Missouri	21	60	158-91-3	62.5

**Age at start of the season*

implicated in an NCAA agent and academic scandal, there was too much smoke on his clothes to survive. Withers did a solid job as interim coach (7-6), and has since been hired by Urban Meyer as co-defensive coordinator at Ohio State. Fedora arrives from Southern Mississippi, where he went 34-19 in four years, including 12-2 last season.

Ohio State

Out: Luke Fickell | **In:** Urban Meyer

The worst-kept secret in coaching searches ended with Meyer's departure from the ESPN booth for the only job he said could have lured him back to the sideline. He inherits a 6-7 team and his predecessor. Fickell was retained as defensive coordinator at the same salary he made last year as Jim Tressel's interim successor. Meyer, of course, has a 65-12 record with two national championship rings, but he burned out terribly at Florida and reportedly lost control of his team.

Mississippi

Out: Houston Nutt | **In:** Hugh Freeze

The purveyor of the Wild Hog and the Wild Rebel has given way to Michael Oher's high school coach in "The Blind Side." Nutt's decline at Ole Miss (from successive nine-win seasons to 4-8 and 2-10) was remarkably sudden. In the meantime, Freeze's ascent to the job is just as remarkable. He wowed them in his one year at Arkansas State, where he was the lowest-paid coach in major-college football ($200,000).

Penn State

Out: Joe Paterno | **In:** Bill O'Brien

The issue here is how O'Brien will be able to progress with the smoldering anger surrounding Paterno's dismissal. The hiring of O'Brien seemed to be a purposeful turning to the outside, and was not greeted warmly by Nittany Lion Nation. O'Brien comes from the New England Patriots, where he served as offensive coordinator. For what it's worth, he went to Brown ... which means all the Penn State head coaches since 1966 have gone to Brown.

Pittsburgh

Out: Todd Graham | **In:** Paul Chryst

Chryst, the former Wisconsin offensive coordinator, enters through the revolving door, becoming the fourth Pitt coach inside of 13 months. The Panthers have the introductory press conference down. It's the keeping of the coach that needs to improve. Graham bolted after 11 months, following Mike Haywood (15 days on the job before being fired when he was arrested on domestic violence charges), and Dave Wannstedt (six seasons).

Rutgers

Out: Greg Schiano | **In:** Kyle Flood

It seems like Schiano did this just about as well as you can do it. He helped build Rutgers into a reputable, competitive program, did not jump at the first couple of chances to cash in, but after 11 seasons (including 49-28 with five bowls in the past six years), he is taking his chance in the NFL. Rutgers was reportedly close to hiring FIU coach Mario Cristobal, but by promoting Flood, the offensive line coach for seven years, the Scarlet Knights retained most of their recruiting class in the aftermath of Schiano's January departure for Tampa Bay.

Southern Mississippi

Out: Larry Fedora | **In:** Ellis Johnson

Johnson will be able to preach the "never give up" gospel to his players, since he tried for the Southern Miss job in 2008 when Fedora was hired. Johnson comes from South Carolina, where he was assistant head coach and defensive coordinator. Fedora went 33-19 in four seasons.

Texas A&M

Out: Mike Sherman | **In:** Kevin Sumlin

Sumlin and his high-scoring offense gets the challenge of ushering A&M into the SEC. He went 35-17 in four years at Houston and was a hot property on the coaching circuit last year. Arizona State and Illinois flirted with him, but he returned to College Station, where he had been an assistant under RC Slocum in 2001. Sherman, the former Packers coach who enjoyed just one winning season in his four at A&M, is back in the NFL as Dolphins offensive coordinator.

Toledo

Out: Tim Beckman | **In:** Matt Campbell

The Rockets' flashy offense earned this job for Campbell, their coordinator, even though he is just 32. Beckman wanted to take him along to Illinois, but Toledo hopes Campbell was the big reason it averaged more than 42 points a game last season.

Tulane

Out: Bob Toledo | **In:** Curtis Johnson

This seemed like a head-scratching hire until Bounty Gate blew up with the New Orleans Saints, where Johnson coached wide receivers since 2006. Maybe he knew something. Maybe Tulane knows something. Johnson has been only a receivers coach in a 24-year career. He's never been a coordinator, let alone run the show. But Toledo had tons of experience running offenses and being a head coach ... and that didn't work out so well, either.

UAB

Out: Neil Callaway | **In:** Garrick McGee

McGee, who left his position as offensive coordinator at Arkansas, is tackling his first head-coaching job — and he's looking at a steep climb. The Blazers have gone 26-57 in the past seven seasons, and McGee will have to overcome an apathetic fan base.

UCLA

Out: Rick Neuheisel | **In:** Jim Mora Jr.

Neuheisel was snake-bit at the quarterback position for all four of his seasons, miscalculated in switching to the Pistol offense halfway through, and stumbled to a 21-29 record. Mora knows a little about being snake-bit. He was fired by the Atlanta Falcons after kidding on Seattle radio his dream job was in Seattle at the University of Washington, and that he'd leave "even if we were in a playoff run." Then he joined the Seattle Seahawks staff, spent a year as Mike Holmgren's replacement-in-waiting, but after Holmgren "retired" in 2008, Mora lasted only a year before USC's Pete Carroll came available ... and the Seahawks fired Mora to hire Carroll.

Washington State

Out: Paul Wulff | **In:** Mike Leach

The Palouse is a lot of open country — plenty of space for Leach to swing his sword. If he can approach his 10-year record at Texas Tech (84-43, 10 bowl appearances), Washington State will be delirious. The Cougars showed annual progress, but didn't manage a winning season in four years under Wulff and hasn't been above .500 since 2003.

SNEAK PEEK

The best and most productive players in college aren't always the ones most coveted by the NFL, which is why we always ask our pals from NFLDraftScout.com to give us a long-range pro perspective.

From this distance, it appears that the 2013 NFL Draft could be a good one for pocket passers.

USC's Matt Barkley, who was in the top 10 of this list last year as an underclassman, is No. 1. No surprise. But a pair of SEC quarterbacks — Tennessee's Tyler Bray and Arkansas' Tyler Wilson — are also in the top five.

Befitting its status as the nation's best conference, the SEC has 15 of the top 28 draft-eligible prospects, according to NFLDraftScout.com.

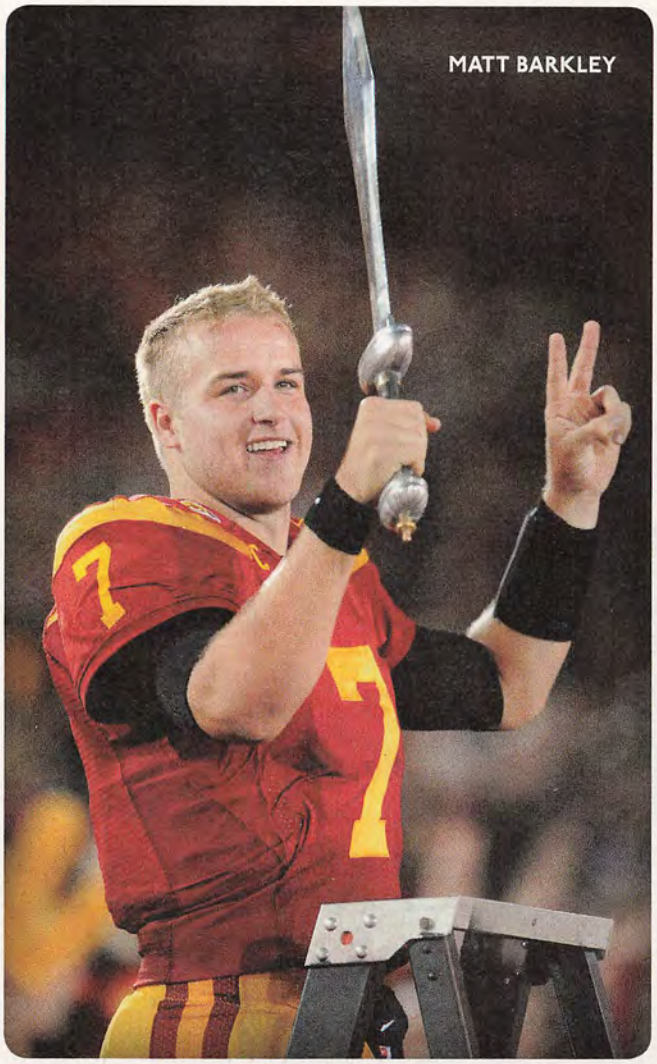

MATT BARKLEY

Photo by Joe Robbins

NO.	PLAYER	POS.	SCHOOL
1.	Matt Barkley	QB	USC
2.	Barkevious Mingo*	DE	LSU
3.	Tyler Bray*	QB	Tennessee
4.	Johnathan Hankins*	DT	Ohio State
5.	Tyler Wilson	QB	Arkansas
6.	Robert Woods*	WR	USC
7.	Marcus Lattimore*	RB	South Carolina
8.	Alex Okafor	DE	Texas
9.	Manti Te'o	LB	Notre Dame
10.	Justin Hunter*	WR	Tennessee
11.	Dominique Easley*	DT	Florida
12.	Bjoern Werner*	DE	Florida State
13.	Jarvis Jones*	OLB	Georgia
14.	Keenan Allen*	WR	California
15.	Corey Lemonier*	DE	Auburn
16.	Tyrann Mathieu*	CB	LSU
17.	Montee Ball	RB	Wisconsin
18.	Brandon Jenkins	DE	Florida State
19.	David Amerson*	CB	NC State
20.	Barrett Jones	OL	Alabama
21.	Kenny Stills*	WR	Oklahoma
22.	Knile Davis	RB	Arkansas
23.	Bennie Logan*	DT	LSU
24.	Johnthan Banks	CB	Mississippi State
25.	Sam Montgomery*	DE	LSU
26.	DeAndre Hopkins*	WR	Clemson
27.	Kevin Reddick	LB	North Carolina
28.	Sean Porter*	LB	Texas A&M
29.	Landry Jones	QB	Oklahoma
30.	William Gholston*	DE	Michigan State
31.	Tyler Eifert*	TE	Notre Dame
32.	Jackson Jeffcoat*	DE	Texas
33.	Chance Warmack*	G	Alabama
34.	John Simon	DL	Ohio State
35.	Kawann Short	DT	Purdue
36.	Joseph Randle*	RB	Oklahoma State
37.	Alex Hurst	OT	LSU
38.	Craig Roh	LB	Michigan
39.	Jonathan Cooper	G	North Carolina
40.	Oday Aboushi	OT	Virginia
41.	Terrance Williams	WR	Baylor
42.	D.J. Fluker*	OT	Alabama
43.	Robert Lester	S	Alabama
44.	Logan Thomas*	QB	Virginia Tech
45.	Tony Jefferson*	S	Oklahoma
46.	Ricky Wagner	OT	Wisconsin
47.	Matt Elam*	S	Florida
48.	Xavier Nixon	OT	Florida
49.	Kwame Geathers*	DT	Georgia
50.	T.J. McDonald	S	USC

*Underclassman

TOP 12 NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

1. MICHIGAN VS. ALABAMA, SEPT. 1 (COWBOYS STADIUM, ARLINGTON, TEXAS)

The up-and-comers from Ann Arbor are looking to climb all the way back against the defending national champs. Can the Wolverines' Denard Robinson be enough of a passing threat? Will the Tide's revamped defensive front roar from the start?

2. NOTRE DAME AT OKLAHOMA, OCT. 27

These college football pillars have met just nine times; just once since 1968. The most recent meeting came in 1999, which was Bob Stoops' first season in Norman. The Irish have had six head coaches since 1999, including George O'Leary, if only for a few minutes.

3. MICHIGAN AT NOTRE DAME, SEPT. 22

This has provided great theater over the years, and last year's was a classic under the lights in the Big House in front of an NCAA-record crowd of 114,804. The Irish, wearing three-leaf clovers on their helmets, scored a TD with 30 seconds left to take the lead, but the Wolverines stunned ND with a long pass and a 16-yard touchdown toss with two seconds left for a 35-31 win.

4. BOISE STATE AT MICHIGAN STATE, AUG. 31

You don't want to mess with the Broncos early, as they have opened the past three seasons by beating Oregon, Virginia Tech and Georgia. All of that, however, was with now-departed quarterback Kellen Moore.

5. FLORIDA AT FLORIDA STATE, NOV. 24

Second-year Gators coach Will Muschamp has to make up ground after losing his debut in the rivalry, 21-7. Florida State has regained the upper hand after losing six in a row, winning the past two meetings and holding Florida to a touchdown each time.

6. SOUTH CAROLINA AT CLEMSON, NOV. 24

The Tigers, especially coach Dabo Swinney, are desperate after losing the past three meetings by a combined 60 points. We're due for a thriller, with a top ACC offense going against a robust SEC defense.

7. NOTRE DAME AT USC, NOV. 24

This is the end of an arduous schedule for the Irish, while the Trojans (presumably runaway champs of the Pac-12 South) will be tuning up for the conference title game and possibly looking for Matt Barkley's Heisman moment. Lane Kiffin and Brian Kelly have split their two meetings.

8. BYU AT UTAH, SEPT. 15

These Holy War rivals went separate ways after the 2010 season — the Utes to the Pac-12 and the Cougars to independence. After extending the heated series for two years, this could be the sad end of the road.

9. AUBURN VS. CLEMSON, SEPT. 1 (ATLANTA)

Clemson hits the field eager to rinse away the taste of the beatdown from West Virginia in the Orange Bowl. Auburn needs to build momentum for the ensuing four-week march that includes games at Mississippi State, vs. LSU and vs. Arkansas.

10. MIAMI VS. NOTRE DAME, OCT. 6 (CHICAGO)

We'd like it better if this was a time-machine game back to the late 1980s, with Lou Holtz and Jimmy Johnson on the sidelines. We'll settle for two programs scratching back for glory at Soldier Field in their first regular-season meeting since '90.

11. WASHINGTON AT LSU, SEPT. 8

Hard to see the Huskies solving LSU's defense, even with quarterback Keith Price, but it's a potentially tricky early test for the Tigers, who open against North Texas.

12. NAVY VS. NOTRE DAME, SEPT. 1 (DUBLIN, IRELAND)

The location is a novelty. The pain Notre Dame feels after losing three of the last five to the Midshipmen is real.

Photo by Rick Osentoski-US PRESSWIRE

MICHIGAN VS. NOTRE DAME

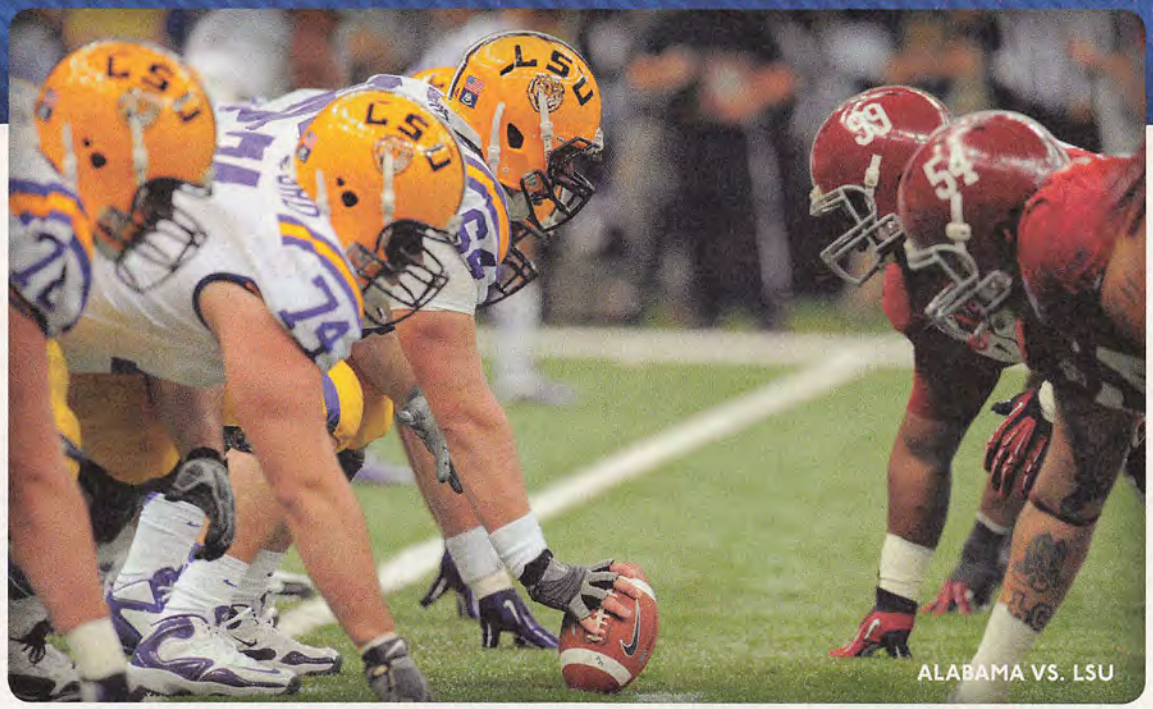


Photo by John David Mercer-US PRESSWIRE

ALABAMA VS. LSU

TOP 12 CONFERENCE GAMES

1. ALABAMA AT LSU, NOV. 3

Will both teams get here undefeated? LSU has previous games at Auburn, Florida and Texas A&M, as well as a home showdown vs. South Carolina. The Tide will have to navigate a neutral-site game vs. Michigan and trips to Arkansas, Missouri, and Tennessee. It could all be a prelude to Game of the Century III.

2. OREGON AT USC, NOV. 3

So, how are you liking Nov. 3 so far? The Trojans shocked the fourth-ranked Ducks last season, ending Oregon's 21-game winning streak in Autzen. Best news: This matchup, flush with playmakers, should be only the first of two, with the rematch coming in the conference title game.

3. MICHIGAN AT OHIO STATE, NOV. 24

This is getting good, again. Michigan is back to being Michigan. Urban is at Ohio State. Denard Robinson. Braxton Miller. The Buckeyes, ineligible for the postseason, can be the ultimate spoiler to "that school up north" as the Wolverines could very well be looking to put a bow on the Legends Division. Michigan, which snapped a seven-game series skid last season, hasn't partied in Columbus since 2000.

4. GEORGIA AT MISSOURI; FLORIDA AT TEXAS A&M, SEPT. 8

The SEC set up its newbies with attractive home games to start the conference season. How accommodating. And then watch the SEC eat its young ... if it can.

5. MICHIGAN STATE AT WISCONSIN, OCT. 27

These teams played two great ones last season, the Spartans winning on a Hail Mary in the regular season and the Badgers one-upping MSU with a come-from-behind 42-39 win in the Big Ten Championship Game. This is the middle of a brutal stretch for Sparty — after a game at Michigan and before a game vs. Nebraska.

6. LSU AT ARKANSAS, NOV. 24

Last day of the regular season. SEC West title at stake?

7. OKLAHOMA VS. TEXAS, OCT. 13 (DALLAS)

A rivalry that stays in the Big 12. Hooray for tradition.

8. OKLAHOMA AT WEST VIRGINIA, NOV. 17

A new non-traditional rivalry that could become one of the best in the Big 12. Hooray for change.

9. GEORGIA AT SOUTH CAROLINA, OCT. 6

The heaviest hitters from the SEC Eastern Division will try to land a few haymakers, while Steve Spurrier fires barbs from outside the ring.

10. ALABAMA AT ARKANSAS, SEPT. 15

After opening against Jacksonville State and Louisiana-Monroe, the Bobby Petrino-less Hogs will see if they still have a chance to be special.

11. MICHIGAN STATE AT MICHIGAN, OCT. 20

Brady Hoke solved Ohio State last season. To be a Legends leader, he has to get his Wolverines to end a four-game skid against State.

12. CLEMSON AT FLORIDA STATE, SEPT. 22

The frontrunner for the ACC Atlantic Division emerges after this game. Mark Stoops' FSU defense is still smarting after giving up 455 yards to the Tigers in a 35-30 loss last season.

COMEBACK PLAYERS

Injuries are part of the game, and so is coming back from them. Here is a look at 10 players who missed all, or a significant part, of last season, including some high-profile running backs:

Knile Davis, RB, Arkansas (broken ankle)

He didn't have any contact in the spring but is expected to have the burst and the cuts that led to an All-SEC sophomore season in which he ran for 1,322 yards and 13 touchdowns. Missed all of last season.

Ray Graham, RB, Pittsburgh (knee)

With 939 yards through six games last year, Graham was on pace for a 2,000-yard season. He is hoping to be 100 percent by fall camp for new coach Paul Chryst.

Montel Harris, RB, Boston College (knee)

He's BC's career rushing leader (3,735 yards) and was granted an extra year of eligibility after playing in only two games last year. Sad news, though: His 2012 season was in doubt after re-injuring the knee at the start of spring.

Justin Hunter, WR, Tennessee (knee)

The tall, speedy sophomore has averaged 22.4 yards a catch in a little more than a season. He blew out his knee in the third game last year when he was leading the SEC in receptions.

Marcus Lattimore, RB, South Carolina (knee)

Was still recovering this spring from a torn ACL suffered in October, when he was leading the SEC in rushing. The outlook was positive for the junior, who can't be stopped even by SEC defenses; he has four games of at least 176 yards vs. the SEC.

Brandon Magee, LB, Arizona State (Achilles' tendon)

The former ASU coaching staff was saying last year that Magee was the team's best linebacker (at least the one with his head on the straightest) before the injury in fall camp. Magee, who made 73 tackles as a junior in 2010, should have no trouble replacing the modest production and lack of leadership from departed would-be superstar Vontaze Burfict.

Kenny Tate, LB, Maryland (knee)

The former All-ACC safety moved to linebacker before last season, which seemed like a curious move, but he's staying there as the Terps put in a 3-4 scheme this spring under new coordinator Brian Stewart. If the defense is as aggressive as promised, Tate should be one of the nation's top defensive playmakers.

Jeff Tuel, QB, Washington St. (collar bone)

Tuel, limited to three games last season because of a variety of ailments, was sensational in the spring game. He could face competition when sophomore Connor Halliday returns in the fall from a liver injury, but Tuel is the one most likely to benefit from Mike Leach's offense.

Nathan Williams, DE, Ohio State (knee)

Projected to be the Buckeyes' top defender last season as a senior, he had to shut it down after one game, eventually needing microfracture surgery. He was still healing as he sat out spring drills, but Ohio State is hopeful that Williams (21.5 career tackles for loss) can team with John Simon and others to create a formidable front line in the fall.

Arizona's ACL army

Here's a special, uh, honor for first-year coach Rich Rodriguez and the Wildcats, who have five players coming back from ACL tears. Ouch, make that four, because safety Adam Hall, the team's hardest hitter and a projected leader, is out again after ripping up the same knee in the spring game. Linebacker Jake Fischer looked great in the spring, though, and defensive tackle Willie Mobley and running back Greg Nwoko were also back for spring ball. Jonathan McKnight, the team's best cornerback, was on pace for a fall camp return.

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1 Alabama

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 4, DT – 5, K – 1, LB – 5, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Alabama's class was led by a trio of five-star prospects in Geismar (La.) Dutchtown safety **Landon Collins**, Daphne (Ala.) running back **T.J. Yeldon**, and Panama City (Fla.) Arnold athlete **Eddie Williams**.

The Crimson Tide addressed needs at wide receiver by adding a trio of prospects from Florida. In addition to Williams, Jacksonville (Fla.) First Coast wide receiver **Chris Black** and Miami (Fla.) Northwestern wide receiver **Amari Cooper** also have the ability to contribute early.

On the defensive side of the ball, Alabama signed a strong group at linebacker with five four-star prospects in the group. Madison (Ala.) Bob Jones four-star inside linebacker **Reggie Ragland** is an imposing force at 6-4, 245 pounds. Daphne (Ala.) High four-star outside linebacker **Ryan Anderson** has the capability to come down to the defensive line, and be a difficult speed-rusher off the edge.

Alabama also addressed a need for depth and talent at defensive back by adding a pair from junior college in Thatcher (Ariz.) Eastern Arizona Junior College four-star cornerback **Travell Dixon** and Booneville (Miss.) Northeast Mississippi Community College three-star cornerback **Deion Belue**. Joining Collins from the high school ranks in the secondary will be Atlanta (Ga.) St. Pius X School four-star cornerback **Geno Smith**.

2 Texas

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 5, DB – 2, DE – 3, DT – 4, K – 1, LB – 5, OL – 4, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Texas once again competed for the recruiting national title with a strong group of 28 signees. The group was led by a pair of in-state five-star prospects in running back **Johnathan Gray** from Aledo and defensive tackle **Malcom Brown** from Brenham. Gray is an ultra-productive back with great size, while Brown is a thick, dominating force in the middle of the defensive line.

Mack Brown and company added several talented offensive linemen with Harker Heights (Texas) High four-star offensive tackle **Camrhon Hughes**, Pearland (Texas) Dawson four-star offensive tackle **Kennedy Estelle**, DeSoto (Texas) High four-star offensive guard **Curtis Riser** and Senatoba (Miss.) Northwest Mississippi Community College four-star offensive tackle **Donald Hawkins**.

They also addressed needs on the defensive line from both the high school and junior college ranks. Joining Brown from the high school ranks is Humble (Texas) four-star defensive tackle **Paul Boyette Jr.** and Dallas (Texas) Bishop Dunne three-star defensive tackle **Alex Norman**. Scooba (Miss.) East Mississippi Community College three-star defensive tackle **Brandon Moore** is a massive 6-6, 335-pound defensive tackle from the junior college ranks.

Two other prospects who could make an early impact at Texas are Austin (Texas) four-star wide receiver **Cayleb Jones** and Athens (Texas) four-star athlete **Kendall Sanders**.

3 Florida

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 4, DE – 5, DT – 3, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 2, QB – 1, RB – 1, TE – 2, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Will Muschamp and staff put together a very strong class in their first full year of recruiting for the Gators. The class is led by a pair of five-star defensive ends in Shelby (N.C.) Crest's **Jonathan Bullard** and St. Petersburg (Fla.) Lakewood's **Dante Fowler Jr.** The Gators also attained the services of five-star offensive tackle **D.J. Humphries** from Charlotte (N.C.) Mallard Creek. Another standout is Land O'Lakes (Fla.) High four-star tight end **Kent Taylor**, who was the top ranked tight end in the nation.

In total, Florida added five defensive ends. Joining Bullard and Fowler Jr. is a trio of three-star prospects in Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas' **Bryan Cox Jr.**, Clemmons (N.C.) West Forsyth's **Alex McCalister** and Tyrone (Ga.) Sandy Creek's **Quinteze Williams**. The defensive tackle group was led by two big men in the middle in Scooba (Miss.) East Mississippi Community College four-star defensive tackle **Damien Jacobs** and Venice (Fla.) four-star defensive tackle **Dante Phillips**.

The Gators also added some top-end talent in the defensive secondary with a pair of in-state signees in Melbourne (Fla.) Holy Trinity four-star safety **Marcus Maye** and Bradenton (Fla.) Southeast four-star cornerback **Brian Poole**.

Joining Taylor at tight end is Warminster (Pa.) Archbishop Wood Catholic four-star tight end **Colin Thompson**, who is an elite blocking tight end.

Seffner (Fla.) Armwood four-star running back **Matt Jones** is a big back that is a very capable receiver out of the backfield.

Another skill position player who brings a lot of versatility to the Gators offensive attack will be Citra (Fla.) North Marion four-star wide receiver **Latroy Pittman**.

Boynton Beach (Fla.) offensive guard **Jessamen Dunker** joins Humphries as the only other offensive lineman signee in the class, but he will provide the Gators with a big and athletic offensive guard down the road.

4 Ohio State

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 4, DE – 3, DT – 1, LB – 4, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: The Buckeyes finished as strong as anyone in the nation after the hiring of Urban Meyer. Their 25-man class is led by two five-star defensive ends — Harrisburg (Pa.) Bishop McDevitt's **Noah Spence** and Cincinnati (Ohio) Taft's **Adolphus Washington**.

Joining Spence and Washington at defensive end will be Canton (Ohio) McKinley four-star defensive end **Se'von Pittman**.

Playing beside that strong defensive end class will be Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Glenbard West four-star defensive tackle **Tommy Schutt**.

Another defensive standout is West Roxbury (Mass.) Catholic Memorial four-star inside linebacker **Camren Williams**, the top player from Massachusetts. He will be joined at linebacker by Galen (Ohio) Olentangy four-star outside linebacker **Josh Perry**.

The offensive class is headlined by Windsor (Colo.) four-star offensive tackle **Joey O'Connor**. Joining him in the trenches will be Vandalia (Ohio) Butler four-star offensive tackle **Taylor Decker**, Cleveland (Ohio) Heights four-star offensive tackle **Kyle Dodson**, Pickerington (Ohio) Central three-star offensive guard **Jacoby Boren**, and Pickerington (Ohio) North three-star offensive guard **Pat Elflein**.

Some offensive playmakers in the class include Columbus (Ohio) St. Francis DeSales four-star running back **Warren Ball**, Canton (Ohio) Glenoak four-star running back **Bri'onte Dunn**, South Bend (Ind.) Washington four-star athlete **David Perkins**, and Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy four-star wide receiver **Michael Thomas**.

5 Stanford

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 3, DT – 2, LB – 2, OL – 7, RB – 1, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: Nearly one-third of Stanford's signing class was along the offensive line, where they brought in seven prospects. The depth and quality of the group is impressive. Tempe (Ariz.) Corona Del Sol five-star offensive tackle **Andrus Peat** and San Clemente (Calif.) High five-star offensive tackle **Kyle Murphy** lead the group. Four of the other five signees along the offensive line are four-star prospects — Eden Prairie (Minn.) High offensive tackle **Nick Davidson**, Brentwood (Tenn.) Brentwod Academy offensive tackle **Graham Shuler**, Pleasant Grove (Utah) High offensive guard **Brandon Fanaika**, and Puyallup (Wash.) High offensive guard **Joshua Garnett**.

Another standout signee for the Cardinal is Atwater (Calif.) Buhach five-star defensive end **Aziz Shittu**. Honolulu (Hawaii) Punahou four-star defensive end **Luke Kaumatule** and College Park (Ga.) Woodward Academy four-star defensive tackle **Jordan Watkins** are another two to keep an eye on.

Ashburn (Va.) Briar Woods four-star safety **Alex Carter** and Leesburg (Fla.) High four-star outside linebacker **Noor Davis** can make an early contribution.

Top offensive skill position signees include Oklahoma City (Okla.) Heritage Hall four-star running back **Barry Sanders** and Los Angeles (Calif.) Loyola four-star wide receiver **Kodi Whitfield**.

6 Florida State

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 1, DT – 4, K – 2, LB – 2, OL – 2, QB – 2, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR –1

THE BUZZ: Florida State signed three five-star prospects, including a pair of defensive tackles. Hueytown (Ala.) dual-threat quarterback **Jameis Winston** can do damage with his arm and legs. Defensively, Denton (Texas) Ryan defensive tackle **Mario Edwards** and Washington (D.C.) Friendship Collegiate Academy defensive tackle **Eddie Goldman** are a strong duo in the middle.

The defensive line class is strong for the Seminoles with the likes of Prattville (Ala.) High four-star defensive tackle **Justin Shanks** and Mobile (Ala.)

Davidson four-star defensive end **Chris Casher** joining Edwards and Goldman.

The Seminoles are excited about Stone Mountain (Ga.) four-star linebacker **Ukeme Eligwe** and Jacksonville (Fla.) First Coast four-star linebacker **Reggie Northrup**.

The defensive back group is led by four-star cornerback **Ronald Darby** from Oxon Hill (Md.) Potomac and a pair of four-star safeties in Ocala (Fla.) Vanguard's **P.J. Williams** and San Antonio (Texas) Brandeis' **Colin Blake**.

Winston is coming in along with some good offensive talent. Cape Coral (Fla.) Island Coast four-star running back **Mario Pender** is a nice mix of speed and size. Orlando (Fla.) Boone four-star wide receiver **Marvin Bracy** has elite speed. Orange (Calif.) Lutheran four-star tight end **Christo Kourtzidis** is a capable blocker who is also a threat down the field in the passing game.

The offensive line group has a pair of junior college signees in Mission Viejo (Calif.) Saddleback Community College offensive tackle **Menelik Watson** and Roswell (N.M.) New Mexico Military Institute three-star offensive tackle **Daniel Glauser**.

7 Michigan

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 4, DE – 3, DT – 3, LB – 4, OL – 4, RB – 3, TE – 2, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Brady Hoke and Michigan landed a special player in Kansas City (Mo.) Park Hill five-star defensive tackle **Ondre Pipkins**. Pipkins is massive at 6-3, 325 pounds and is surprisingly athletic when pursuing quarterbacks and ball carriers.

Another top signee is Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward five-star offensive tackle **Kyle Kalis**, considered the top prospect in Ohio for the 2012 class.

A couple of other talented offensive linemen taking their ability to the Wolverines are Carlsbad (Calif.) La Costa Canyon four-star offensive tackle **Erik Magnuson** and Nashville (Tenn.) Montgomery Bell Academy four-star offensive tackle **Blake Bars**.

Switching back to defense, Michigan landed a strong linebacker group led by four-star inside linebacker **Royce Jenkins-Stone** from Detroit (Mich.) Cass Tech and a pair of four-star outside linebackers in Orchard Lake (Mich.) St. Mary's **James Ross** and Cincinnati (Ohio) Colerain's **Joe Bolden**.

A pair of offensive skill players to keep an eye on are Detroit (Mich.) Martin Luther King four-star running back **Dennis Norfleet** and West Des Moines (Iowa) Dowling four-star wide receiver **Amara Darboh**. Norfleet is a versatile running back who is great at creating in space, while Darboh is a bigger target at wide receiver with excellent speed.

8 Southern California

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 3, LB – 2, OL – 3, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: USC signed just 15 prospects, but only two of them are ranked below four-star status. Low on quantity, but extremely high on quality.

All three five-star prospects in the class play on the offensive side of the ball. Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star wide receiver **Nelson Agholor** is a versatile offensive weapon who can make an instant impact. Lakewood (Wash.) Lakes five-star offensive tackle **Zach Banner** is massive at 6-9, 310 pounds, while Encino (Calif.) Crespi five-star offensive guard **Jordan Simmons** also has his fair share of bulk at 6-5, 333 pounds.

Joining Banner and Simmons up-front on the offensive line is Santa Margarita (Calif.) Catholic four-star offensive tackle **Max Tuerk**.

The Trojans didn't just dip into Florida for Agholor, they also got a very talented defensive end from the Sunshine State in Daytona Beach (Fla.) Mainland four-star **Leonard Williams**.

The defensive back haul was also very good as they landed Woodland Hills (Calif.) Pierce Community College four-star safety **Gerald Bowman**, the nation's top junior college player. Joining Bowman will be Inglewood (Calif.) High four-star cornerback **Devian Shelton** and Pasadena (Calif.) Muir four-star cornerback **Kevon Seymour**.

9 Miami

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 8, DE – 5, DT – 3, LB – 3, OL – 3, QB – 3, RB – 2, WR – 5

THE BUZZ: Miami signed the largest class in the nation with 33 prospects. The Hurricanes added much needed depth, especially at defensive back, along the defensive line, at quarterback and at wide receiver.

The top two prospects in Miami's class hail from right around the corner from the campus. Miami (Fla.) Norland five-star all-purpose back **Randy 'Duke' Johnson** was arguably the top high school player in the Sunshine State. Miramar (Fla.) five-star cornerback **Tracy Howard** was ranked the top college prospect from Florida in the 2012 class.

Joining Howard at the top of the class is Miami (Fla.) Columbus four-star safety **Deon Bush**.

Other top defensive signees include Tampa (Fla.) Jefferson four-star defensive end **Tyriq McCord**, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star defensive end **Jelani Hamilton**, and Stone Mountain (Ga.) Stephenson four-star linebacker **Raphael Kirby**.

Offensive standouts include four-star wide receivers **Robert Lockhart** and **Malcolm Lewis**. Lockhart, from Fork Union (Va.) Fork Union Military Academy, has good size and runs precise routes. Lewis, who was teammates with Howard at Miramar (Fla.) High, is a quick wide receiver with sure hands.

Miami (Fla.) Norland four-star offensive tackle **Ereck Flowers** has a high ceiling as an edge blocker and could be an early contributor.

Wellington (Fla.) Palm Beach Central four-star athlete **Angelo Jean-Louis** could contribute on either side of the ball.

10 Auburn

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 1, DT – 1, LB – 2, OL – 7, QB – 2, RB – 1, TE – 2, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Gene Chizik and Auburn signed a top 10 class on the shoulders of a strong offensive line group. Out of the seven signees on the offensive line, five of them are ranked as four-star prospects. The top offensive line signee for the Tigers was Palm Beach Gardens (Fla.) four-star offensive tackle **Avery Young**. Joining Young at the tackle spot is four-star **Shane Callahan** from Parker (Colo.) Chaparral, four-star **Patrick Miller** from West Palm Beach (Fla.) Dwyer, and four-star **Jordan Diamond** from Chicago (Ill.) Simeon. Castle Rock (Colo.) Valor Christian four-star offensive guard **Alex Kozan** also opted for Auburn.

Both wide receiver signees — Tyrone (Ga.) Sandy Creek four-star **JaQuay Williams** and Miami Beach (Fla.) four-star **Ricardo Louis** — offer good size and athleticism.

Four-star tight end **Ricky Parks** from Hogansville (Ga.) Callaway and four-star running back **Jovon Robinson** from Memphis (Tenn.) Wooddale are also solid offensive additions for the Tigers.

Fairburn (Ga.) Creekside cornerback **Joshua Holsey** was the top defensive signee for Auburn in 2012. He and Birmingham (Ala.) Woodlawn four-star outside linebacker **Cassanova McKinzy** have the potential to make an early contribution.

11 Oklahoma

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 2, DE – 3, LB – 1, OL – 4, QB – 1, RB – 3, TE – 4, WR – 5

THE BUZZ: The Sooners top signee was a prospect who they originally landed the services of in 2011 — five-star wide receiver **Trey Metoyer** — who had to go to prep school in order to qualify.

Metoyer leads a strong wide receiver group that also includes St. Louis (Mo.) DeSmet four-star wide receiver **Durron Neal**, Oklahoma City (Okla.) Heritage Hall four-star wide receiver **Sterling Shepard**, Inglewood (Calif.) High four-star wide receiver **Derrick Woods** and Roseville (Calif.) Sierra Community College four-star wide receiver **Courtney Gardner**.

The offensive class also included four-star quarterback **Trevon Knight** of San Antonio (Texas) Ronald Reagan, four-star running back **Alex Ross** of Jenks (Okla.), four-star tight end **Taylor McNamara** of San Diego (Calif.) Westview, and a pair of four-star offensive lineman in Santa Clarita (Calif.) College of the Canyons offensive tackle **Will Latu** and Apopka (Fla.) **Ty Darlington**.

The top defensive signee in the class was Seffner (Fla.) Armwood four-star outside linebacker **Eric Striker**. Overall, just six of the signees for the Sooners were on the defensive side of the ball.

12 Georgia

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DE – 4, DT – 2, K – 2, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 3, TE – 1, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Georgia landed two five-star prospects in the 2012 class. Jacksonville (Fla.) Bolles five-star offensive tackle **John Theus** will join his brother, long snapper Nathan Theus, in Athens. The top prospect in the Peach State in 2012, Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes five-star athlete **Josh Harvey-Clemons**, decided to play for the Bulldogs.

In total, 11 of the 19 signees come from the Peach State. Joining Harvey-Clemons at the top of that group is Hamilton (Ga.) Harris County four-star defen-

sive end **Jordan Jenkins**, Millen (Ga.) Jenkins County four-star defensive tackle **Jonathan Taylor**, Eastman (Ga.) Dodge County four-star defensive end **Leonard Floyd**, and Tucker (Ga.) four-star defensive end **Josh Dawson**.

After Theus, the top offensive prospects for Georgia are two running backs who both hail from North Carolina. Raleigh (N.C.) Millbrook four-star all-purpose back **Keith Marshall** is a talented runner with great speed, while Tarboro (N.C.) four-star running back **Todd Gurley** has a great combination of speed and size.

13 UCLA

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 4, DE – 3, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 1, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 5

THE BUZZ: Jim Mora immediately got to work after being hired at UCLA and put together a strong finish over the final month of the recruiting season. His top get was five-star defensive tackle **Ellis McCarthy** from Monrovia (Calif.) High.

Other prospects landed over the final month of the process include Old Tappan (N.J.) High four-star athlete **Devin Fuller**, Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian four-star wide receiver **Jordan Payton**, Chandler (Ariz.) High four-star wide receiver **Javon Williams**, and Murrieta (Calif.) Vista Murrieta four-star defensive end **Jeremy Castro**.

Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian four-star defensive back **Ishmael Adams** pledged to Mora and company after their arrival.

One holdover from the previous staff that is capable of making an immediate impact is Compton (Calif.) Dominguez four-star offensive tackle **Lacy Westbrook**.

14 Clemson

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 3, DE – 2, DT – 3, K – 1, LB – 1, OL – 5, QB – 1, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Clemson put together a solid class that added talented depth and some prospects that could contribute early on in their careers.

The top prospect in the class was Tallahassee (Fla.) North Florida Christian four-star safety **Travis Blanks**. The top offensive prospect was Charlotte (N.C.) Phillip O Berry Academy of Technology four-star wide receiver **Germone Hopper**.

Jonesboro (Ark.) Jonesboro Senior four-star athlete **Zac Brooks** could find his way onto the field early. His primary position will be as a running back, but his unique combination of speed and size at 6-2, 180 pounds makes him valuable in Clemson's spread attack.

Defensive tackle **Carlos Watkins**, a four-star prospect from Forest City (N.C.) Chase could find his way onto the field early.

Buffalo (N.Y.) St. Joseph's four-star quarterback **Chad Kelly** likely won't be called upon early in his career at Clemson, but he is a good athlete with a big arm who can fill the void that will be left when Tajh Boyd concludes his career.

15 Texas A&M

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 3, DE – 5, DT – 1, LB – 1, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Texas A&M prepared for their move to the SEC by signing a strong class led by one of the nation's best offensive players. Spring (Texas) Dekaney five-star running back **Trey Williams** is a dynamic weapon who had an ultra-productive high school career, with more than 8,000 rushing yards over his final three seasons and scoring over 80 rushing touchdowns.

The offensive class also includes Houston (Texas) four-star quarterback **Matt Davis** and Dallas (Texas) Skyline four-star wide receiver **Thomas Johnson**. Davis can make things happen with his arms and his legs and shows great leadership skills. Johnson could work inside or outside and is very good after the catch. The best offensive lineman in the group is Missouri City (Texas) Elkins four-star center **Mike Matthews**, who was the nation's top center in the 2012 class.

The defensive class is led by Mesquite (Texas) Horn four-star cornerback **DeVante Harris**. Harris is a 5-11, 160-pound cornerback. Four-star outside linebacker **Jordan Richmond** of Denton (Texas) Ryan also make his way onto the field early.

Carthage (Texas) High four-star athlete **Edward Pope** (6-3, 170) was a defensive back for most of his high school career, but had a great senior season at wide receiver. He could contribute on either side of the ball.

16 Oregon

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 3, DE – 5, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 1, OL – 1, QB – 2, RB – 1, TE – 2, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Chip Kelly and Oregon signed 21 prospects in their 2012 class. The top prospect was Elk Grove (Calif.) Pleasant Grove four-star defensive end **Arik Armstead**. Armstead could play on either side of the ball, as he also projects as an offensive tackle at 6-8, 280 pounds

Armstead wasn't the only standout defensive end in the Oregon's class. He was joined by Portland (Oregon) Central Catholic four-star defensive end **Alex Balducci** and Honolulu (Hawaii) Punahou four-star defensive end **DeForest Buckner**.

Hillsboro (Ore.) Liberty four-star outside linebacker **Brett Bafaro** was another top defensive signee for the Ducks.

On the offensive side, Oregon loaded up with top-tier talent at the skill positions. Rocklin (Calif.) Whitney four-star quarterback **Jake Rodrigues** has excellent arm strength and accuracy.

Rodrigues will like targets such as Cincinnati (Ohio) Taft four-star wide receiver **Dwayne Stanford** and Missouri City (Texas) Hightower four-star wide receiver **Bralon Addison**. Oregon also added two athletic tight ends in Lyndhurst (Ohio) Brush four-star **Pharaoh Brown** and Aurora (Colo.) Grandview four-star **Evan Baylis**. San Jose (Calif.) Valley Christian four-star running back **Byron Marshall** is one of the nation's best.

17 Tennessee

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 3, DE – 3, DT – 2, K – 1, LB – 1, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: The Volunteers were looking for immediate help at wide receiver and they turned to the junior college ranks in Hutchinson (Kansas) Hutchinson Community College four-star wideout **Cordarrelle Patterson**. Patterson, who is 6-4, 205 pounds, is a big outside target who can to stretch the field.

Patterson leads a strong group of wide receivers. He is joined by Norcross (Ga.) High four-star wide receiver **Jason Croom**, Jackson (Tenn.) Christian four-star wide receiver **Drae Bowles**, and Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater four-star wide receiver **Alton Howard**.

They will be happy to know that they are coming in along with a talented quarterback in Fruit Cove (Fla.) Bartram Trail four-star signal-caller **Nathan Peterman**. Peterman is a smart quarterback with a strong arm, nice touch.

Four-star athlete **Davante Bourque** from Crowley (La.) High will likely end up at running back. The 6-3, 200-pounder provides good size in the offensive backfield and is explosive with the ball in his hands.

The defensive class is headlined by Dallas (Texas) Wilmer-Hutchins four-star safety **LaDarrell McNeil**. Joining McNeill in the secondary will be fellow four-star cornerback **Deion Bonner** of Columbus (Ga.) Carver.

A pair of four-star defensive tackles also are making their way to Knoxville. Milledgeville (Ga.) Georgia Military College defensive tackle **Daniel McCullers** was a top junior college prospect. Flint (Mich.) Powers Catholic defensive tackle **Danny O'Brien** is coming from the high school ranks.

18 LSU

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 5, DE – 1, K – 1, LB – 5, OL – 5, QB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Despite coming off a season where the Tigers played for the national championship, they find themselves down in the pack a bit with regards to recruiting rankings. While the class doesn't have any five-star prospects or headline grabbers, it does include a lot of talent.

One big need addressed by Les Miles and his staff was along the offensive line. They brought in five linemen led by New Orleans (La.) Edna Karr four-star offensive tackle **Derek Edinburgh** and Buford (Ga.) four-star offensive guard **Vadal Alexander**.

The Tigers are also bringing in skill talent on the offensive side of the ball in two outside receivers. Pompano Beach (Fla.) Blanche Ely four-star wide receiver **Avery Johnson** and Breaux Bridge (La.) four-star wide receiver **Travin Dural** are both big, athletic targets.

The top defensive signee for the Tigers was New Orleans (La.) O. Perry Walker four-star cornerback **Dwayne Thomas**. Other top defensive signees include Katy (Texas) Morton Ranch four-star defensive end **Danielle Hunter**, Oxford (Ala.) four-star outside linebacker **Kwon Alexander** and Patterson (La.) four-star outside linebacker **Lorenzo Phillips**.

Four-star athlete **Lamar Louis** from Breaux Bridge (La.) High will also likely end up on defense, starting his career at linebacker.

19 South Carolina

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 5, DE, – 2, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: The Gamecocks landed two major offensive weapons in their 2012 signing class in Stone Mountain (Ga.) Stephenson four-star running back **Mike Davis** and Lexington (S.C.) High four-star wide receiver **Shaq Roland**. Davis is a productive back with good size and speed who can do work in-between the tackles or on the outside. Roland is a big-play wide receiver who can score in a variety of ways.

Another wide receiver to keep an eye on will be Monroe (N.C.) Sun Valley four-star **Jody Fuller**. The 6-0, 200-pound wide receiver with 4.5 speed could find a role early in his career with the Gamecocks.

Four-star athlete **Jerell Adams**, who is making his way to South Carolina after spending a year at Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy, will likely start out as a tight end.

The five-man offensive line class is led by four-star tackle **Brock Stadnik** of Greensboro (N.C.) Western Guilford and four-star guard **Joe Harris** of Lithonia (Ga.).

The top defensive signees for Steve Spurrier and his staff are a pair of safeties — Cape Coral (Fla.) Island Coast four-star **Jordan Diggs** and College Park (Ga.) Banneker four-star **Chaz Elder**.

20 Notre Dame

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 4, DE – 1, DT – 2, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Notre Dame landed its biggest commitment in mid-January when five-star quarterback **Gunner Kiel** of Columbus (Ind.) East High flipped his commitment from LSU and immediately enrolled in South Bend. Kiel, the top-ranked pro-style quarterback in the country, has the potential to be one of the next great college quarterbacks.

In the future, Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star wide receiver **Davonte Neal** will likely be a popular target for Kiel. Neal is a smooth wide receiver with great speed who is excellent after the catch.

Austintown (Ohio) Austintown Fitch four-star running back **William Mahone** will be another key cog in Notre Dame's offensive attack. Everett (Wash.) Mariner four-star athlete **KeiVarae Russell** could end up in the backfield with Mahone or on the outside as a wide receiver, but his future is definitely on the offensive side of the ball.

Las Vegas (Nev.) Bishop Gorman four-star offensive tackle **Ronnie Stanley** is the top offensive linemen making his way to South Bend.

On defense, East Orange (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep four-star safety **Elijah Shumate** will likely be looked upon to contribute early in a thin defensive backfield for Notre Dame.

The front seven added some bulk on defense when a pair of four-star defensive tackles — Indianapolis (Ind.) Warren Central's **Sheldon Day** and Rochester (N.Y.) Aquinas Institute's **Jarron Jones** — signed with Notre Dame.

Fresno (Calif.) Washington Union four-star cornerback **Tee Shapard** was a top signee for the Irish and enrolled early in South Bend, but he has already withdrawn from school and departed from Brian Kelly's team.

21 Washington

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 4, DE – 4, DT – 1, K – 2, LB – 1, OL – 5, QB – 2, RB – 2, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Washington's class was headlined by Sacramento (Calif.) Grant five-star safety **Shaq Thompson**. Thompson pledged his services to the Huskies and gives them a physical, imposing safety to build a defense around. He was considered the top prospect in California for the 2012 class.

On the offensive side of the ball, Steve Sarkisian is getting a pair of talented quarterbacks to work with in Denver (Colo.) Mullen four-star **Cyler Miles** and Mercer Island (Wash.) High four-star **Jeff Lindquist**.

Four-star athlete **Jaydon Mickens** likely ends up on the offensive side of the ball as a wide receiver. The 5-8, 170-pounder is a quick, elusive target in the open field who will likely play the slot position.

On defense, Compton (Calif.) Dominguez four-star cornerback **Brandon Beaver** will join Thompson in the secondary.

Patterson (Calif.) High four-star defensive end **Pio Vatuvei** could also find his way onto the field early on in his career.

22 Virginia Tech

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 5, DE – 3, DT – 2, LB – 5, OL – 3, RB – 3, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: The top player in Frank Beamer's 2012 signing class was Midlothian (Va.) Clover Hill four-star athlete **Joel Caleb**. Caleb will likely end up a wide receiver when he arrives in Blacksburg and he will be a nice weapon for the Hokies. He is a physical player at 6-2, 201 pounds with the ability to make big plays in a variety of ways.

Caleb wasn't the only top offensive weapon lured to Virginia Tech in 2012, as a pair of running back signees are worth keeping an eye on. Chesapeake (Va.) Oscar Smith four-star running back **J.C. Coleman** and Exton (Pa.) Downingtown East four-star running back **Drew Harris** are both explosive. Coleman is more of a small, shifty back, while Harris is a physical, tough runner.

On defense, the Hokies loaded up at linebacker, signing a total of five at the position. Chesterfield (Va.) Lloyd C. Bird four-star outside linebacker **Deon Clarke** is the top prospect in the group. Also keep an eye on Clifton (Va.) Centreville four-star outside linebacker **Ken Ekanem** and Ringgold (Va.) Dan River four-star outside linebacker **Trey Edmunds**.

Miami (Fla.) Central four-star cornerback **Donaldven Manning** isn't physically intimidating, but he has excellent quickness and good instincts making him a perfect fit in the Virginia Tech secondary.

23 California

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 2, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 4, QB – 1, RB – 2, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: The top prospect in the Golden Bears' 2012 signing class is a talented pro-style quarterback Danville (Calif.) San Ramon Valley four-star signal-caller **Zach Kline**. Kline has shown the ability to attack all parts of the field with a big arm and good accuracy.

He will have a nice group of receivers stepping on campus along with him, led by a trio of four-star wideouts — Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco's **Bryce Treggs**, Lakewood's (Calif.) **Darius Power**, and Upland (Calif.) High's **Kenny Lawler**. There is also a good chance that Lakewood (Wash.) Lakes four-star athlete **Cedric Dozier** ends up catching passes.

The offensive line signing class was led by Richmond (Calif.) Salesia four-star offensive tackle **Freddie Tagaloa**.

Cal signed just one defensive prospect considered a four-star or higher and that was Concord (Calif.) De La Salle inside linebacker **Michael Barton**.

24 Rutgers

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DE – 2, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: Despite going through a coaching change on the verge of signing day, Rutgers was able to retain a majority of its commitments and add a few down the stretch to finish with a top 25 class.

The top commitment for the Scarlet Knights came from Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep five-star defensive end **Darius Hamilton,** who opted to stay home for his college career just days before signing day.

Another top addition on the defensive side was Sicklerville (N.J.) Timber Creek four-star inside linebacker **Quanzell Lambert**. The 6-2, 230-pound inside linebacker could be an early contributor for the Big East program.

The offensive class for Rutgers was led by Boyertown (Pa.) Boyertown Area Senior four-star offensive tackle **Chris Muller** and fellow four-star offensive tackle **J.J. Denman** from Fairless Hills (Pa.) Pennsbury.

Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep four-star wide receiver **Leonte Carroo** is the top skill position player coming in on the offensive side of the ball.

25 Nebraska

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 1, DE – 2, DT – 2, LB – 4, OL – 2, QB – 1, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Nebraska signed a smaller class that was split down the middle with regards to offensive and defensive signees. The top signee in the class came on the defensive side of the ball in Thatcher (Ariz.) Eastern Arizona Junior College four-star cornerback **Mohammed Seisay**. Seisay can be an immediate contributor for the Cornhuskers.

Other possible early contributors on defense for Bo Pelini and his staff will be Riverside (Calif.) Riverside Community College four-star outside linebacker **Zaire Anderson** and Akron (Ohio) Hoban four-star defensive end **Greg McMullen**.

On offense, Arvada (Colo.) Arvada West four-star offensive tackle **Paul Thurston** is the top signee for the Huskers.

Lombard (Ill.) Montini four-star wide receiver **Jordan Westerkamp** is the top skill position player on offense making his way to Lincoln next year.

Winnfield (La.) Winnfield Senior four-star athlete **Alonzo Moore** has the capability to contribute on either side of the ball upon his arrival at Nebraska.

100 FOR 2012

INCOMING FRESHMEN

TOP 100 PLAYERS BY POSITION

Rk	Name	Ht./Wt.	Hometown/School	College
QUARTERBACKS				
10.	Jameis Winston	6-4/200	Hueytown (AL) Hueytown	Florida State
20.	Gunner Kiel	6-4/220	Columbus (IN) East	Notre Dame
35.	Cyler Miles	6-4/220	Denver (CO) Mullen	Washington
44.	Zach Kline	6-2/210	Danville (CA) San Ramon Valley	California
59.	Tanner Mangum	6-3/195	Eagle (ID) Eagle	BYU
RUNNING BACKS				
5.	Johnathan Gray	5-11/190	Aledo (TX) Aledo	Texas
12.	T.J. Yeldon	6-2/205	Daphne (AL) Daphne	Alabama
15.	Trey Williams	5-8/175	Spring (TX) Dekaney	Texas A&M
30.	Randy Johnson	5-9/180	Miami (FL) Miami Norland	Miami (FL)
38.	Mario Pender	6-0/185	Cape Coral (FL) Island Coast	Florida State
42.	Todd Gurley	6-1/195	Tarboro (NC) Tarboro	Georgia
48.	Keith Marshall	5-11/190	Raleigh (NC) Millbrook	Georgia
55.	Rushel Shell	6-0/210	Aliquippa (PA) Hopewell	Pittsburgh
63.	Mike Davis	5-10/200	Stone Mountain (GA) Stephenson	South Carolina
WIDE RECEIVERS				
1.	Dorial Green-Beckham	6-6/220	Springfield (MO) Hillcrest	Missouri
8.	Stefon Diggs	6-0/185	Olney (MD) Our Lady Of Good Counsel	Maryland
18.	Nelson Agholor	6-2/180	Tampa (FL) Berkeley Prep	USC
34.	Thomas Johnson	6-0/180	Dallas (TX) Skyline	Texas A&M
41.	Cayleb Jones	6-3/198	Austin (TX) Austin	Texas
45.	Amari Cooper	6-1/175	Miami (FL) Northwestern	Alabama
49.	Deontay Greenberry	6-3/187	Fresno (CA) Washington Union	Houston
58.	Chris Black	5-11/170	Jacksonville (FL) First Coast	Alabama
62.	Durron Neal	6-1/195	State Louis (MO) DeSmet	Oklahoma
66.	Shaq Roland	6-1/170	Lexington (SC) Lexington	South Carolina
75.	Germone Hopper	6-0/165	Charlotte (NC) Phillip O Berry Acad Of Tech	Clemson
81.	Bryce Treggs	5-11/171	Bellflower (CA) State John Bosco	California
87.	Gabriel Marks	6-0/175	Los Angeles (CA) Venice	Washington State
90.	JaQuay Williams	6-3/204	Tyrone (GA) Sandy Creek	Auburn
93.	Jordan Payton	6-2/199	Westlake Village (CA) Oaks Christian	UCLA
TIGHT ENDS				
54.	Kent Taylor	6-5/220	Land O'Lakes (FL) Land O' Lakes	Florida
OFFENSIVE LINEMEN				
2.	D.J. Humphries	6-5/265	Charlotte (NC) Mallard Creek	Florida
16.	Zach Banner	6-9/310	Lakewood (WA) Lakes	USC
19.	Kyle Murphy	6-7/275	San Clemente (CA) San Clemente	Stanford
22.	Kyle Kalis	6-5/302	Lakewood (OH) State Edward	Michigan
23.	John Theus	6-6/292	Jacksonville (FL) Bolles	Georgia
29.	Jordan Simmons	6-5/333	Encino (CA) Crespi	USC
32.	Andrus Peat	6-7/305	Tempe (AZ) Corona Del Sol	Stanford
33.	Joshua Garnett	6-5/295	Puyallup (WA) Puyallup	Stanford
46.	Max Tuerk	6-6/294	Santa Margarita (CA) Santa Margarita	USC
52.	Isaac Seumalo	6-3/280	Corvallis (OR) Corvallis	Oregon State
67.	Kennedy Estelle	6-7/300	Pearland (TX) Dawson	Texas
74.	Avery Young	6-6/273	Palm Beach Gardens (FL) Palm Beach Gardens	Auburn
78.	Erik Magnuson	6-6/275	Carlsbad (CA) La Costa Canyon	Michigan
96.	Curtis Riser	6-3/283	DeSoto (TX) DeSoto	Texas
100.	Chris Muller	6-6/287	Boyertown (PA) Boyertown Area Senior	Rutgers
DEFENSIVE ENDS				
6.	Jonathan Bullard	6-4/255	Shelby (NC) Crest	Florida
9.	Noah Spence	6-4/245	Harrisburg (PA) Bishop McDevitt	Ohio State
11.	Darius Hamilton	6-4/245	Ramsey (NJ) Don Bosco Prep	Rutgers
25.	Adolphus Washington	6-4/230	Cincinnati (OH) Taft	Ohio State
27.	Aziz Shittu	6-3/275	Atwater (CA) Buhach	Stanford
28.	Dante Fowler Jr.	6-3/232	State Petersburg (FL) Lakewood	Florida
36.	Chris Casher	6-4/225	Mobile (AL) Davidson	Florida State
50.	Eli Harold	6-4/215	Virginia Beach (VA) Ocean Lakes	Virginia
51.	Channing Ward	6-4/250	Aberdeen (MS) Aberdeen	Mississippi
53.	Leonard Williams	6-5/254	Daytona Beach (FL) Mainland	USC
56.	Jordan Jenkins	6-3/245	Hamilton (GA) Harris County	Georgia
61.	Arik Armstead	6-8/280	Elk Grove (CA) Pleasant Grove	Oregon
65.	Javonte Magee	6-5/262	San Antonio (TX) Sam Houston	Baylor
92.	Tyriq McCord	6-3/222	Tampa (FL) Jefferson	Miami (FL)
95.	Se'von Pittman	6-5/245	Canton (OH) McKinley	Ohio State
97.	Alex Balducci	6-4/262	Portland (OR) Central Catholic	Oregon
99.	Ifeadi Odenigbo	6-4/210	Centerville (OH) Centerville	Northwestern
DEFENSIVE TACKLES				
3.	Mario Edwards	6-4/275	Denton (TX) Ryan	Florida State
7.	Eddie Goldman	6-4/307	Washington (DC) Friendship Collegiate Academy	Florida State
14.	Ondre Pipkins	6-3/325	Kansas City (MO) Park Hill	Michigan
21.	Ellis McCarthy	6-5/311	Monrovia (CA) Monrovia	UCLA
26.	Malcom Brown	6-2/280	Brenham (TX) Brenham	Texas
64.	Tommy Schutt	6-2/301	Glen Ellyn (IL) Glenbard West	Ohio State
72.	Jonathan Taylor	6-4/315	Millen (GA) Jenkins County	Georgia
LINEBACKERS				
40.	Jabari Ruffin	6-4/230	Downey (CA) Downey	USC
43.	Reggie Ragland	6-4/245	Madison (AL) Bob Jones	Alabama
47.	Ukeme Eligwe	6-3/210	Stone Mountain (GA) Stone Mountain	Florida State
73.	Vince Biegel	6-3/210	Wisconsin Rapids (WI) Wisc Rapids Lincoln	Wisconsin
77.	Noor Davis	6-4/233	Leesburg (FL) Leesburg	Stanford
89.	Nick Dawson	6-3/228	Charlotte (NC) Phillip O Berry Acad Of Tech	Louisville
91.	Kwontie Moore	6-2/243	Norfolk (VA) Norfolk Christian School	Virginia
94.	Raphael Kirby	6-0/208	Stone Mountain (GA) Stephenson	Miami (FL)
98.	Ryan Anderson	6-3/250	Daphne (AL) Daphne	Alabama
DEFENSIVE BACKS				
4.	Shaq Thompson	6-2/210	Sacramento (CA) Grant	Washington
13.	Tracy Howard	5-11/175	Miramar (FL) Miramar	Miami (FL)
17.	Landon Collins	5-11/199	Geismar (LA) Dutchtown	Alabama
57.	Alex Carter	6-0/193	Ashburn (VA) Briar Woods	Stanford
60.	Travis Blanks	6-1/195	Tallahassee (FL) North Florida Christian	Clemson
68.	Ronald Darby	5-11/172	Oxon Hill (MD) Potomac	Florida State
69.	DeVante Harris	5-11/160	Mesquite (TX) Horn	Texas A&M
70.	Marcus Maye	6-1/195	Melbourne (FL) Holy Trinity	Florida
76.	Tee Shepard	6-1/180	Fresno (CA) Washington Union	Notre Dame
80.	Brian Poole	5-11/187	Bradenton (FL) Southeast	Florida
82.	Kevon Seymour	6-0/180	Pasadena (CA) Muir	USC
83.	Deon Bush	6-1/185	Miami (FL) Columbus	Miami (FL)
85.	Yuri Wright	6-2/180	Ramsey (NJ) Don Bosco Prep	Colorado
86.	LaDarrell McNeil	6-1/190	Dallas (TX) Wilmer-Hutchins	Tennessee
88.	Geno Smith	5-11/180	Atlanta (GA) St Pius X School	Alabama
ATHLETES				
24.	Eddie Williams	6-4/204	Panama City (FL) Arnold	Alabama
31.	Josh Harvey-Clemons	6-5/208	Valdosta (GA) Lowndes	Georgia
37.	Devin Fuller	6-0/185	Old Tappan (NJ) Old Tappan	UCLA
39.	Kendall Sanders	6-1/175	Athens (TX) Athens	Texas
71.	D.J. Foster	5-11/190	Scottsdale (AZ) Saguaro	Arizona State
79.	Cyrus Jones	5-11/183	Baltimore (MD) Gilman School	Alabama
84.	Joel Caleb	6-2/201	Midlothian (VA) Clover Hill	Virginia Tech

100 FOR 2013

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

TOP 100 PLAYERS BY POSITION

Rk.	Name	Ht./Wt.	Hometown/School

QUARTERBACKS

8.	Max Browne	6-5/202	Sammamish, WA/Skyline
11.	Tyrone Swoopes	6-5/220	Whitewright, TX/Whitewright
16.	Shane Morris	6-3/183	Warren, MI/De La Salle
47.	Ryan Burns	6-4/218	Ashburn, VA/Stone Bridge
71.	Troy Williams	6-0/173	Harbor City, CA/Narbonne
80.	Johnathon McCrary	6-3/180	Ellenwood, GA/Cedar Grove

RUNNING BACKS

9.	Thomas Tyner	6-0/200	Beaverton, OR/Aloha
18.	Ty Isaac	6-3/215	Joliet, IL/Joliet Catholic
20.	Altee Tenpenny	5-11/200	North Little Rock, AR/North Little Rock
23.	Greg Bryant	5-11/200	Delray Beach, FL/American Heritage School
48.	Justin Davis	6-1/195	Stockton, CA/Lincoln
64.	Derrick Green	6-0/215	Richmond, VA/Hermitage
74.	Kailo Moore	5-10/180	Rosedale, MS/West Bolivar
87.	Taquan Mizzell	5-10/180	Virginia Beach, VA/Bayside
90.	Ryan Green	5-10/195	State Petersburg, FL/Catholic

WIDE RECEIVERS

13.	Ricky Seals-Jones	6-5/220	Sealy, TX/Sealy
19.	Derrick Griffin	6-6/215	Rosenberg, TX/Terry
24.	Marquez North	6-3/205	Charlotte, NC/Mallard Creek
26.	Robert Foster	6-3/170	Monaca, PA/Central Valley
31.	Laquon Treadwell	6-3/183	Crete, IL/Crete Monee
45.	Stacy Coley	6-1/175	Oakland Park, FL/Northeast
52.	Steven Mitchell	5-11/170	Mission Hills, CA/Bishop Alemany
59.	Ahmad Fulwood	6-4/197	Jacksonville, FL/Bishop Kenny
61.	Jake Oliver	6-4/194	Dallas, TX/Jesuit
97.	Demarcus Robinson	6-2/200	Fort Valley, GA/Peach County

TIGHT ENDS

22.	Adam Breneman	6-5/220	Camp Hill, PA/Cedar Cliff
35.	O.J. Howard	6-6/226	Autauga, AL/Autauga Academy
55.	DeSean Smith	6-4/222	Lake Charles, LA/Barbe
96.	Jake Butt	6-6/230	Pickerington, OH/Pickerington North

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

3.	Laremy Tunsil	6-6/275	Lake City, FL/Columbia
25.	Kent Perkins	6-5/300	Dallas, TX/Lake Highlands
27.	Ethan Pocic	6-7/285	Lemont, IL/Lemont
46.	Chris Fox	6-6/297	Parker, CO/Ponderosa
49.	Steve Elmer	6-6/305	Midland, MI/Midland
51.	Jake Raulerson	6-4/250	Celina, TX/Celina
54.	Patrick Kugler	6-5/280	Wexford, PA/North Allegheny
57.	Austin Golson	6-4/277	Prattville, AL/Prattville
60.	Kyle Bosch	6-5/285	Wheaton, IL/State Francis
67.	Reeve Koehler	6-3/280	Honolulu, HI/State Louis
83.	Evan Lisle	6-6/265	Centerville, OH/Centerville
92.	Darius James	6-5/319	Killeen, TX/Harker Heights
98.	Aaron Cochran	6-6/320	Atwater, CA/Buhach

DEFENSIVE ENDS

1.	Robert Nkemdiche	6-5/260	Loganville, GA/Grayson
6.	Kenny Bigelow	6-3/285	Elkton, MD/Eastern Christian Academy
14.	Joey Bosa	6-5/260	Fort Lauderdale, FL/St. Thomas Aquinas
21.	Eddie Vanderdoes	6-4/285	Placer, CA/Placer
42.	Dee Liner	6-2/274	Muscle Shoals, AL/Muscle Shoals
50.	Garrett Sickels	6-4/240	Little Silver, NJ/Red Bank Regional
73.	Isaac Rochell	6-5/260	McDonough, GA/Eagle's Landing Christian
76.	Jordan Sherit	6-4/245	Tampa, FL/Hillsborough
81.	Kylie Fitts	6-4/260	Redlands, CA/East Valley
91.	Carl Lawson	6-2/253	Alpharetta, GA/Milton
93.	Joe Mathis	6-4/254	Upland, CA/Upland
99.	D.J. Ward	6-4/240	Lawton, OK/Lawton
100.	Jonathan Allen	6-3/225	Ashburn, VA/Stone Bridge

DEFENSIVE TACKLES

33.	Montravius Adams	6-3/290	Vienna, GA/Dooly County
43.	Henry Poggi	6-3/250	Baltimore, MD/Gilman School
63.	Isaiah Golden	6-2/295	Carthage, TX/Carthage
69.	A'Shawn Robinson	6-4/302	Fort Worth, TX/Arlington Heights
70.	Michael Hill	6-3/315	Pendleton, SC/Pendleton
78.	Greg Webb	6-2/290	Sicklerville, NJ/Timber Creek
82.	Caleb Brantley	6-3/285	Crescent City, FL/Crescent City
85.	Jaynard Bostwick	6-4/291	Port State Lucie, FL/St. Lucie West Centennial
89.	Justin Manning	6-3/275	Dallas, TX/Kimball

LINEBACKERS

2.	Reuben Foster	6-2/228	Auburn, AL/Auburn
12.	Matthew Thomas	6-3/201	Miami, FL/Booker T. Washington
15.	E.J. Levenberry Jr.	6-3/226	Woodbridge, VA/C. D. Hylton
17.	Michael Hutchings	6-2/210	Concord, CA/De La Salle
34.	Jaylon Smith	6-3/202	Fort Wayne, IN/Bishop Luers
36.	Trey Johnson	6-1/220	Lawrenceville, GA/Central Gwinnett
37.	Dorian O'Daniel	6-1/205	Olney, MD/Our Lady Of Good Counsel
40.	Chans Cox	6-3/220	Lakeside, AZ/Blue Ridge
44.	Mike McCray	6-4/230	Trotwood, OH/Trotwood-Madison
53.	Daniel McMillian	6-3/220	Jacksonville, FL/First Coast
62.	Peter Kalambayi	6-3/229	Matthews, NC/Butler
68.	Doug Randolph	6-3/215	Richmond, VA/Woodberry Forest School
88.	Johnny O'Neal	6-2/225	Dublin, GA/West Laurens
95.	Larenz Bryant	6-1/203	Charlotte, NC/Vance

DEFENSIVE BACKS

4.	Kendall Fuller	6-0/185	Olney, MD/Our Lady Of Good Counsel
5.	Su'a Cravens	6-1/205	Murrieta, CA/Vista Murrieta
7.	Cameron Burrows	6-1/195	Trotwood, OH/Trotwood-Madison
10.	Vernon Hargreaves III	5-10/177	Tampa, FL/Wharton
28.	Eli Woodard	6-1/185	Voorhees, NJ/Eastern
30.	Max Redfield	6-2/195	Mission Viejo, CA/Mission Viejo
32.	Leon McQuay III	6-2/177	Seffner, FL/Armwood
38.	Antonio Conner	6-2/192	Batesville, MS/South Panola
39.	Marcell Harris	6-2/205	Orlando, FL/Dr. Phillips
56.	Mackensie Alexander	5-11/175	Immokalee, FL/Immokalee
58.	Dashon Hunt	5-10/175	Westlake Village, CA/Westlake
65.	Tray Matthews	6-1/190	Newnan, GA/Newnan
72.	Holland Fisher	6-2/205	Midlothian, VA/Manchester
77.	Dymonte Thomas	6-1/175	Alliance, OH/Marlington
79.	Will Likely	5-7/171	Belle Glade, FL/Glades Central
84.	Priest Willis	6-2/200	Tempe, AZ/Marcos De Niza
86.	Kameron Miles	6-2/200	Mesquite, TX/West Mesquite
94.	Nick Washington	6-0/180	Jacksonville, FL/Trinity Christian

ATHLETES

29.	Derrick Henry	6-3/241	Yulee, FL/Yulee
41.	Jalin Marshall	6-0/190	Middletown, OH/Middletown
66.	John Diarse	6-0/202	Monroe, LA/Neville
75.	ArDarius Stewart	6-3/190	Fultondale, AL/Fultondale

TOP 10 SCHOOLS BY POSITION

Quarterback

1. Florida State
2. Washington
3. Purdue
4. Notre Dame
5. Oregon
6. Cal
7. Southern Miss
8. BYU
9. Auburn
9. Cincinnati

Running back

1. Georgia
2. Alabama
3. Virginia Tech
4. Miami
5. Michigan
6. Ole Miss
7. Texas
8. Texas A&M
9. Ohio State
10. Cincinnati

Wide Receiver

1. Oklahoma
2. Tennessee
3. Miami
4. Maryland
5. Cal
6. USC
7. Texas Tech
8. UCLA
9. Texas A&M
10. South Carolina

Tight End

1. Florida
2. Oregon
3. Auburn
4. Oklahoma
5. Oregon State
5. TCU
7. USC
7. USF
9. Oklahoma State
10. Michigan

Offensive Line

1. Stanford
2. Auburn
3. USC
4. Michigan
5. Texas
6. Oregon State
7. Oklahoma
8. Ohio State
9. Florida
10. Rutgers

Defensive Tackle

1. Florida State
2. Texas
3. Alabama
4. Michigan
5. Florida
6. Clemson
7. UCLA
8. Mississippi State
8. Tennessee
10. Notre Dame

Defensive End

1. Florida
2. Ohio State
3. Oregon
4. Stanford
5. Georgia
6. Miami
7. Arkansas
8. Virginia
9. Mississippi State
9. USC

Linebacker

1. Alabama
2. Texas
3. LSU
4. Michigan
4. Virginia Tech
6. Ohio State
7. Louisville
8. Nebraska
9. USC
10. Florida State

Defensive Back

1. Miami
2. Alabama
3. Washington
4. Florida
5. Ohio State
6. Florida State
7. South Carolina
8. Notre Dame
9. USC
10. Virginia Tech

Athlete

1. Texas
2. Alabama
3. Georgia
4. UCLA
5. Georgia Tech
5. Mississippi State
7. Washington
8. Virginia Tech
9. Clemson
10. Virginia

Kicker

1. Florida State
1. Purdue
3. Duke
4. Alabama
4. Clemson
6. Georgia
6. TCU
8. Washington
9. South Carolina

NATIONAL PICKS

Ready to Stick the Landing

Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images

1. LSU

LSU did everything except stick the landing last season. The Tigers, kings of the comebacks and lords of one of the finest college football seasons ever for 13 games, had to swallow a goose-egg omelet, eagerly fed by league rival Alabama. Too bad it was in the BCS Championship Game.

Talk about all the motivation they need for this season. "Fire back" mode describes LSU perfectly after the sting of the title game.

No one doubts the Tigers' ammunition. The big boys on both sides of the line are nasty and among the nation's finest — the best way to be when setting out to hunt down the national championship. Size, speed and athleticism fill the roster — just your typical SEC championship team — plus these Tigers are led by a Honey Badger loaded for bear.

THE GOOD NEWS: LSU has a quarterback. Zach Mettenberger, who began his career at Georgia before being dismissed for legal issues, will do what Jordan Jefferson couldn't in the national title game: Stand and deliver. Coach Les Miles won't veer from loving on his punishing ground game — a four-headed backfield is a year older and better — but Mettenberger creates the needed balance. CB Tyrann Mathieu returns to make plays everywhere all the time, while defensive ends Sam Montgomery and Barkevious Mingo are lightning bolts off the edge and can't be successfully double-teamed at once.

THE BAD NEWS: The Tigers lost Thorpe Award-Winning cornerback Morris Claiborne early to the NFL Draft, and receiver Rueben Randle and defensive tackle Michael Brockers also took an early train out of Baton Rouge. LSU fans don't want to think too hard about who's next if Mettenberger goes down ... or just isn't up to the task. As with last year, the Tigers will have to earn every inch of their No. 1 ranking with road games at Auburn, Florida, Texas A&M and Arkansas.

OUR CALL: It's insanity to bet against the SEC winning its seventh consecutive national title. LSU gets Alabama in Baton Rouge for what should be the defining game of the college season. No team in the country looks better in its uniforms than LSU, and this time when the Tigers run out the clock at the end of the season, it will be to celebrate their third national championship in 10 years.

2. USC

Talented roster returns to glory

Matt Barkley confounded the draftniks and disappointed the rest of the Pac-12 by staying for his senior season, just like Matt Leinart did for the Trojans in 2005. Coach Lane Kiffin will forever be in Barkley's debt as the 37-year-old coach now sees his career really taking off after whatever that was with the Oakland Raiders, a false start at Tennessee, and two years of a postseason ban at USC.

THE GOOD NEWS: Barkley has the best receiver in the country in Robert Woods, and if Woods isn't No. 1, Marqise Lee might be. Multiple All-Americans dot the lineup, just like the Pete Carroll days. USC gets Oregon in the L.A. Coliseum, probably twice (once in the regular season, once in Pac-12 title game).

THE BAD NEWS: USC has 10 fewer scholarship players than most teams, capped at 75 this season as NCAA sanctions kick in. Depth is a concern virtually everywhere and trucking through to a 13-0 haul will require injury blessings from the football gods.

OUR CALL: The Trojans re-turned a corner last season by winning at Oregon in mid-November and are hitting the accelerator back to the glory days. The offense will be flat-out unstoppable ... a nice contrast, wouldn't you say, to LSU's defense in January?

3. Alabama

Restocking ... repeating not out of the question

The easy way to get another national championship trophy is to spend $30,000 on a new Waterford crystal football to replace the one that was shattered when a player's parent accidentally knocked it off its perch in the spring. The hard way is to earn it on the field after losing half of your starters on offense and defense, including Heisman finalist running back Trent Richardson, while trying to steer through the swamps of the SEC West — and win in Baton Rouge.

THE GOOD NEWS: Alabama's offensive line is the best in the country; QB AJ McCarron manages the game beautifully; and another star (or two) will emerge at running back. Nick Saban has recruited and evaluated better than anyone in the past five years.

THE BAD NEWS: The Tide is still crazy-talented on defense, but it takes experience to run the defense as Saban wants, and that's what Alabama lacks in places. There's no telling when the next shank, yank, or worm-burner is going to come in the kicking game.

OUR CALL: The Tide will play hearty defense, run the ball, gain field position through special teams, and not turn it over. It will work. Again. We have them No. 3 ... so we're seeing only one L — at LSU.

4. Oklahoma

Bouncing back is Sooners' strong suit

It wasn't just the injuries. It wasn't just the late-season flameout. It wasn't just booting a chance at an eighth conference title in 13 seasons under Bob Stoops. It was that Oklahoma State capitalized on it all to win its first Big 12 championship. You can bet 2011 isn't sitting lightly in the OU craw. How do we know? Following seasons in which the Sooners haven't won a conference title under Stoops, they are 50-8.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Landry Jones, who slumped in the second half of the season, is recommitted, having spent part of spring practice studying under quarterback guru George Whitfield Jr. in California. Four offensive line starters return from a unit that gave up only 11 sacks on 583 throws.

THE BAD NEWS: Jones must thrive without WR Ryan Broyles, whose late-season injury was costly. Backup QB Blake "Belldozer" Bell is a Wildcat wild card, but how will that all play out? The defense, while talented, wasn't particularly physical last season.

OUR CALL: The record-setting Jones will rebound in a big way. So will RB Dominique Whaley, a walk-on who was poised to lead the team in rushing before being injured. A national title might be possible if OU can win at West Virginia and TCU in the final three weeks.

5. Oregon

Flying as high as a kite

The Ducks came out ahead in offseason transactions, with quarterback Darron Thomas making the dubious decision to leave early for the NFL, while coach Chip Kelly kept his feet on the ground in Eugene after flirting with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Replacing Thomas, while unexpected, is relatively easy — plug in Bryan Bennett or Marcus Mariota. Kelly is proving to be one of a kind, going 36-6 in three seasons with three conference titles and one national title game appearance.

THE GOOD NEWS: Running back Kenjon Barner is still fast. Running back/receiver/returner De'Anthony Thomas is a rocket booster in Nikes. Offense? No prob. Defense? Speedy. The non-conference schedule is easy-breezy and the Ducks should be walking on water all the way to 9-0 and a date at USC.

THE BAD NEWS: There's been a lot of, uh, smoke around the Oregon program with NCAA investigators snooping around over possible recruiting misdeeds and a spring ESPN report over alleged widespread marijuana use among the Ducks. Is this a program on the brink of very bad things?

OUR CALL: Who's going to beat these guys except for USC? Yeah, nobody. The Ducks have averaged 43 points per game under Kelly and continue to live in the fast lane.

6. Georgia

Big-time defense and big-time schedule

Coach Mark Richt distanced himself from the hot seat with a 10-game winning streak and an SEC East title last season. He's averaged 9.6 victories across 11 seasons in Athens, so any knocks on him mostly have to be chalked up to the hyperventilation of SEC fans. Richt will keep on keeping on (and, perhaps, then some) with QB Aaron Murray, plenty of playmakers, and a hulking, talented and veteran defense.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Dawgs won't dazzle with schemes on offense, but they do what they do well. If 2011 star recruit Isaiah Crowell doesn't stay durable and emerge as a star in the backfield, 2012 star recruit Keith Marshall will. Best news: No LSU, Alabama or Arkansas on the league schedule.

THE BAD NEWS: The offensive line lost three starters. The defense has to deal with multiple suspensions early in the season. The running game has to show up against physical teams (73 carries for 129 yards in season-ending losses to LSU and Michigan State).

OUR CALL: One SEC assistant coach told *Lindy's* that, "Georgia, to me, is the most talented defense in the league, no question." That's good enough for us to predict an East title and a close SEC championship game this time around.

7. Michigan

Sudden rise has Big Blue thinking bigger

Going 11-2 and winning the Sugar Bowl in his first season wiped away much of the frustration from the three-year Rich Rodriguez era, but it sure didn't do Brady Hoke any favors going forward. Any patience the Wolverines' faithful would have extended is gone now, given that smashing debut. Despite the record, he's still scrambling to cover some deficiencies in depth and talent. But if teams are going to make Michigan pay, they better hurry before Hoke's recruiting success takes hold.

THE GOOD NEWS: Michigan has a pair of 1,000-yard rushers in QB Denard Robinson and TB Fitzgerald Toussaint. Robinson says his comfort level running Al Borges' system for a second year is "day and night" from last year. That can't be good for opponents.

THE BAD NEWS: NT Mike Martin's departure alone would leave a gaping hole on the defensive line, but two other starters are gone from a unit that wasn't overly deep. Michigan has to shuffle up front, where defensive success starts ... or doesn't.

OUR CALL: Michigan opens against Alabama in Dallas and plays three of its first five away from Ann Arbor. The season-finale at Ohio State is no picnic, either, but the Wolverines should be able to outscore a lot of their problems.

8. FLORIDA STATE

'Noles entering now-or-never territory

Waiting for the tide to rise again after repeated epic recruiting hauls, Florida State has needed only ankle waders under Jimbo Fisher. The promise of a return to prominence has seemed realistic; there are enough blue-chip recruits on the roster that last season's 9-4 record can be classified as an unmitigated disappointment. The potential of Signing Day can only carry a coach so far; it's time for Fisher to change the discussion back to championships. We're thinking 11 wins should do it.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Seminoles should have a guillotine of a defense with speed and explosiveness at every level of that unit. QB EJ Manuel is electric and could be a difference-maker if he adds consistency.

THE BAD NEWS: Offensive line — namely left tackle, where DT convert Cameron Ewing could start — is unsettled. The personnel turnover on special teams rates as a chief worry for a team with a woeful recent history in close games (three losses by five points or less last season).

OUR CALL: Manuel need not be a Heisman Trophy candidate. He just needs to let the weapons around him work for him and count on a cutthroat defense to be the team's meal ticket to the BCS.

9. Arkansas

Which way, Hogs? Tough to say

Arkansas built a bridge to 2013 by bringing back popular assistant coach John L. Smith on a 10-month contract, but there still could be troubled water below the wake of Bobby Petrino's career face-plant. This looked to be *the* year for the Hogs, but how should we recalibrate expectations with an interim head coach? Will this be a more fragile team? Or could this be a rally-around-the-campfire moment? Hard to say.

THE GOOD NEWS: Offensive coordinator Paul Petrino ranked senior QB Tyler Wilson just a step below Superman this spring. No one argued. The Hogs have all manner of Saturday superheroes, including RB Knile Davis, who should be back to 2010 form after 2011's ankle injury.

THE BAD NEWS: Arkansas' defense is good, but doesn't rank with the SEC elite; consider that the Razorbacks allowed a combined 79 points in losses to LSU and Alabama last season. And Auburn fans happily remember the 65 the Tigers plastered on the Hogs in 2010.

OUR CALL: We like the hiring of Smith, who will retain the meeting of the minds between the players and coaches. But the Hogs have hit the SEC West glass ceiling, not breaking through, even with home games vs. LSU and 'Bama.

10. WEST VIRGINIA

Mountaineers Have Muscle to Take Big 12

Leaving the Big East for the Big 12 is not a lateral move, rather a major jump in class based on the offense and NFL-caliber talent on the other sideline every week. Second-year head coach Dana Holgorsen, formerly the coordinator at Oklahoma State, knows his offense works here. Whether the defense gets enough traction with its new-look 3-4 against the likes of Oklahoma and TCU is the great unknown entering 2012.

THE GOOD NEWS: Holgorsen can coach quarterbacks. Geno Smith leads an elite offense that attacks vertically, horizontally and everyplace in between. The Mountaineers have speed from marquee skill guys that go three deep at halfback, plus two 1,000-yard receivers — Tavon Austin and Stedman Bailey.

THE BAD NEWS: WVU goes from a league dotted with dormant offenses to the OK Corral that is the Big 12. The Mountaineers could really use DE/LB Bruce Irvin, who became a first-round 2012 draft pick. Coaches called the revamped 3-4 scheme a work in progress in the spring.

OUR CALL: Unlike the Big East, October and November in the Big 12 bring few breathers, but it looks as if the Mountaineers are conditioned to be marathon runners, as well as sprinters.

11. South Carolina

Poised for a run at East title

It only took 20 years, but South Carolina looks like an honest-to-goodness SEC program, built on first-round defensive talent, a punishing ground game, and one of the best coaches money can buy. You can make the case that no coach in the SEC has squeezed more out of his talent the past few years than Steve Spurrier, especially last season when he reversed course at quarterback and lost his star running back at midseason ... and still won a school-record 11 games.

THE GOOD NEWS: RB Marcus Lattimore is back from injury to plow even the stoutest of defenses. Dual-threat QB Connor Shaw could offer, at long last, the stability needed at the position. The only better pair of DEs (Jadeveon Clowney, Devin Taylor) is at LSU. Maybe.

THE BAD NEWS: The architect of the defense, coordinator Ellis Johnson, is gone, taking over as the boss at Southern Miss. A playmaker on each side of the ball — WR Alshon Jeffery and CB Stephon Gilmore — left early for the NFL. Gamecocks have to play LSU and Arkansas; East rival Georgia does not.

OUR CALL: The Gamecocks haven't lost in the past two years to annual rivals Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, and Clemson. Maybe only the Dawgs get them this season.

12. Michigan State

Young, talented, and making titles a habit

The return of 17 starters, only five of whom are seniors, suggests more success is on the way after coach Mark Dantonio guided MSU to consecutive 11-win seasons, including a share of the Big Ten title in 2010 and a Legends Division crown last year. More such good times should lie ahead, given the talent and experience Dantonio has returning. We'll know early one way or another, as Sparty takes on Boise State, Notre Dame and Ohio State — all at home — before the end of September.

THE GOOD NEWS: Four starters on the offensive line and tandem tailbacks Le'Veon Bell and Edwin Baker give MSU a chance to break in new quarterback Andrew Maxwell and an inexperienced receiving corps through a tough early schedule.

THE BAD NEWS: Maxwell seemed ready to take over for three-year starter Kirk Cousins, but a sprained knee knocked him out of the last half of spring practice. That didn't help him build a rapport with a receiving group that must replace B.J. Cunningham and Keshawn Martin.

OUR CALL: The Spartans are salty on defense, led by rush end William Gholston, and have a run game built for Big Ten success. That's got to be worth at least nine regular-season wins.

13. CLEMSON

Tigers look to get tougher on D

Set aside the perspiration on coach Dabo Swinney's brow over the prospect of replacing three starting offensive linemen and focus on what he cares about most — defense. Former Oklahoma coordinator Brent Venables was brought in to help Clemson not just repeat as conference champions, but to become a wrecking-ball group akin to the edgy Sooners' defenses of yesteryear. That defense will be tested every day in practice by better skill players than it will see on Saturdays.

THE GOOD NEWS: There aren't many offensive trios better than this dynamic group — QB Tajh Boyd, superstar WR Sammy Watkins and 1,000-yard rusher Andre Ellington. In the second half of the season, all the pedestal games are in Death Valley — Virginia Tech, Georgia Tech, NC State, South Carolina.

THE BAD NEWS: The Tigers must delete any recall of the 70-33 whipping from West Virginia in what became the Orange Crush Bowl, as well as the lopsided losses at NC State and South Carolina in back-to-back games in November.

OUR CALL: Clemson's talent level rates with the elite in the conference. That's nothing new. But the defense has to improve for the Tigers to be more than just a fun team to watch.

14. Ohio State

Meyer's arrival has Buckeyes smiling

Urban Meyer's return to the sideline and to OSU, where he started his career as a graduate assistant coach in the 1980s, immediately erased the lingering bitterness among those too thick to understand that Jim Tressel's lies to the NCAA and to his own school couldn't be tolerated. Buckeye fans are all-in with Meyer, whose pursuit of a third BCS title ring must wait until the expiration of a one-year bowl ban left by Tressel.

THE GOOD NEWS: Sophomore QB Braxton Miller gives Meyer a piece of clay perfectly tailored to run the offense that Alex Smith and Tim Tebow rode to fame. DE John Simon's rejection of an early entry into the NFL also provides a fulcrum on which to build the defense.

THE BAD NEWS: OSU finished 115th nationally in passing a year ago and returns no receiver with more than 14 catches. The linebackers were underachieving in 2011, which is one reason OSU struggled to its first losing season since 1999.

OUR CALL: A friendly schedule and the euphoria over Meyer's arrival should work for a nice bounce-back from OSU's 6-7 finish. If the Buckeyes can add some element of the pass, and Miller can stay healthy, a 10-win season isn't far-fetched.

15. TCU

Move up to the Big 12 offers big opportunities

A new stadium, a new conference, a new outlook. All of it can't come fast enough after an offseason drug scandal that resulted in the arrest of four players for alleged dealing. As the most overachieving non-automatic qualifier of the BCS era, the Horned Frogs know the schedule is getting tougher in the Big 12, but they're ready. TCU specializes in slaying bigger, badder opponents ... and it gets Oklahoma at home.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Casey Pachall made them forget Andy Dalton real quick-like. Throwing for 473 yards in a win at Boise State will do that. The backfield is set: Ed Wesley, Matthew Tucker and Waymon James combined for 2,100 yards. DE Stansly Maponga has All-America talent.

THE BAD NEWS: Strangely, Gary Patterson must revamp the defense. A unit that finished No. 1 in total D three years running slumped to 32nd last season. TCU will face five of 2011's top 15 offenses playing in the Big 12. LB Tanner Brock, one of those arrested, is the biggest loss from the drug busts.

OUR CALL: Patterson's 4-2-5 stack defense gets the toughest season-long test of his TCU career. Playing at Oklahoma State and West Virginia in back-to-back games will be the difference in the season. Ten wins aren't out of the question.

16. Oklahoma State

Gundy has Cowboys maturing into a real power

How do you follow the best season in school history? Coach 'em up. Part of the story of Oklahoma State's near-BCS title game season was the maturation of coach Mike Gundy. The Eddie Robinson National Coach of the Year also cashed in on a lot of T. Boone Pickens' cash, so Oklahoma State isn't going away as Gundy enters the prime of his career as a recruiter, play-caller, and coach. The Cowboys are no longer Texas and Oklahoma's little brother.

THE GOOD NEWS: RB Joseph Randle was overshadowed by the axis of Brandon Weeden and Justin Blackmon, but only Barry Sanders scored more TDs in a single Oklahoma State season. The Pokes are going to be more of a running team, which will be fine.

THE BAD NEWS: The quarterback position looks bare. Is that too harsh? Only one QB on the roster has thrown a pass in a college game. The winner at the end of the spring was true freshman Wes Lunt, who won't have the top two WRs from last year.

OUR CALL: Gundy has proven himself. The pipeline is rolling at Stillwater, and as long as Texas is on the rebound, consider Oklahoma State the second-best program in the Big 12.

17. Wisconsin

Major roster turnover doesn't dim hopes

Consecutive trips to the Rose Bowl and a resulting pair of excruciatingly close losses have ratcheted up the hunger for a BCS bowl win. Ohio State's one-year bowl ban will only help Bret Bielema coach his team back to the league championship game in Indianapolis and continue its recent dominance of the conference, as he sticks with what works: Running the same off-tackle play over and over.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Badgers will try to duplicate Russell Wilson's success in his lone year after transferring from North Carolina State by opening their arms to Maryland transfer Danny O'Brien. The 2010 ACC Newcomer of the Year will arrive in time for fall camp and to take over under center.

THE BAD NEWS: Bielema might need name tags to recognize the new coaches. Only three holdovers return from last season. The Badgers' 10 returning starters are also the fewest number of any team in the Big Ten.

OUR CALL: It's impossible to overlook a team planning to play Montee Ball and James White together in the backfield, given their combined 4,700 rushing yards the past two years. Wisconsin can ground and pound its way to the Big Ten title game if O'Brien makes a relatively smooth transition.

18. Virginia Tech

Supremely talented Thomas leads youthful Hokies

Junior QB Logan Thomas, as naturally gifted as they come with his defensive end body type (6-6, 262), can do a little bit of everything. He has electrifying ability and should elevate the offense in critical junctures until the supporting cast can be identified. The Hokies enter the season with a depth chart pocked with inexperience around Thomas; four offensive linemen, RB David Wilson, two wideouts and lead tight end were replaced from the 2011 group.

THE GOOD NEWS: Nine starters return from the Hokies' seventh-ranked defense, including the entire front seven, and depth everywhere. They're equipped to face almost any scheme and avoid mismatches. D-linemen James Gayle and Luther Maddy are game-changers.

THE BAD NEWS: The schedule is a minefield with five games against teams coming off of bye weeks and trips to Miami and Clemson. The Hokies almost always have a gem to carry the ball, but they enter the season unproven there and on the offensive line.

OUR CALL: Frank Beamer's postseason record has fallen into a 1-for-5 slump since 2004. But Thomas and a salty Bud Foster defense will tee up another good opportunity.

19. TEXAS

From back-of-pack to return of the Mack?

Texas was 8-5 in 2011, a respectable rebound from a losing 2010 season, but the Longhorns were outclassed by Oklahoma State, Baylor and OU in a season in which coach Mack Brown never found that easy-chair level of comfort he's been accustomed to. With a more seasoned roster and relative stability at quarterback, the Longhorns are contenders because they've rediscovered trademark strengths — big, powerful and deep along the offensive line and nasty on defense.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB David Ash is well ahead of Case McCoy at quarterback; plentiful options are available at running back and Ash can lean on big-play speed at receiver. Defensive coordinator Manny Diaz has a better feel for his personnel — and vice versa — in Year Two.

THE BAD NEWS: Depth thinner than a tortilla on defense could be problematic, and the difference between eight and 10 wins likely rides on the impact of the 2012 recruiting class. Brown's summertime stress might come from a kicking game that looked shaky in spring drills.

OUR CALL: UT doesn't need the next Vince Young or Colt McCoy. But if Ash is a capable manager, the Longhorns will survive tough times — like a three-game stretch against OSU, West Virginia and Oklahoma.

20. Florida

If the QB position settles down ...

A 7-6 record won't earn Will Muschamp many celebratory chomps in The Swamp. Gainesville expects championships, not fringe bowl bids. To restore Florida atop the SEC pecking order, the defense-fueled coach has to figure out the offense. Which is to say: UF can't catch Alabama and LSU unless sophomore QBs Jacoby Brissett and Jeff Driskel exceed expectations. "I'm not really looking for style points. I'm looking for production," Muschamp said.

THE GOOD NEWS: Florida has a veteran defense and a stellar kicking game. A deep and talented stable of running backs led by Mike Gillislee can carry the offense until the quarterbacks get comfortable. New offensive coordinator Brent Pease wants a pedal-to-metal attack that keeps opponents guessing.

THE BAD NEWS: The defense suffered a blow with the torn ACL of junior DE Ronald Powell, but the Gators are hopeful he will return by October. LSU and Alabama don't fire blanks, and there's no guarding against shellshock for the fresh meat under center.

OUR CALL: Muschamp needs more fireworks to give the people what they come to see. The spring signs were mostly positive, but if one or both quarterbacks prove to be duds, Florida's title chances go up in smoke. Florida remains a rung (rungs?) below Alabama and LSU.

21. Stanford

Unlucky, but still dangerous

The two men most responsible for 31 victories over the past three seasons are gone — coach Jim Harbaugh left after the 2010 season, and two-time Heisman runner-up Andrew Luck became the first pick in the 2012 NFL Draft. David Shaw made a seamless transition last year to the head coach's headsets, retaining all of Harbaugh's brawny style on a campus known for brains. Luck has run out (OK, we can finally put those to rest), with sophomore Brett Nottingham or junior Josh Nunes poised to take over.

THE GOOD NEWS: Stanford was third nationally against the run last season, and that front seven, led by NT Terrence Stephens, DE Ben Gardner, LB Chase Thomas and LB Shayne Skov, is the team's strength. RB Stepfan Taylor fuels Stanford's tough-and-tricky rushing attack.

THE BAD NEWS: There is no getting around the drop-off at quarterback, which figures to result in more negative plays and pressure on the passing game, where the receivers are. ... Big-time OLs Jonathan Martin and David DeCastro are gone.

OUR CALL: Shaw signed the fifth-best class in the nation, according to Rivals.com, and this golden age of Stanford football isn't over. In 2012, the ground game and ferocious front seven keep Stanford relevant and dangerous.

22. Kansas State

Finding a way despite tiny margin for error

Doubt Bill Snyder at your own risk. At age 71, he's as savvy as ever. With a roster picked near the bottom of the Big 12 in 2011, he won 10 games. The Wildcats should have played in the Sugar Bowl. K-State is the anti-Big 12 in a league that is famous for its quarterbacks and offense. The Cats squeeze out enough offense (only 337 yards per game last year) and make enough big defensive plays to be pesky.

THE GOOD NEWS: A lot of folks considered QB Collin Klein the most valuable player in the country last year. Not the Heisman Trophy winner, just a guy who, if you took him off the roster, would be the difference between 10 wins and sitting at home during bowl season. LB Arthur Brown and CB Nigel Malone are rather studly.

THE BAD NEWS: The Wildcats probably need things to go just right. They won eight games last year by a touchdown or less. Klein is resilient, but if he is to stay upright, his protection must get better. Three starters are being replaced in the offensive line.

OUR CALL: Another 10-win season? Not quite. The secret to their success just might be pulling a repeat of 2011, when they were ninth in turnover margin.

23. LOUISVILLE

Best of a weak Big East good enough

Coach Charlie Strong knows respect is a reach given the recent collective product the Big East placed in the BCS, and he spent the offseason doing a Dangerfield act to Kentucky media, which he felt paid too much attention to the Final Four basketball team. Now that West Virginia calls the Big 12 home, Louisville has the muscle to win a conference title in Strong's third season with the core of the 2011 team back and QB Teddy Bridgewater leading a balanced offense.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Cardinals are loaded at running back, three sophomore wideouts bring big-play flair and Bridgewater, a sophomore, has all-league skills. Strong can't call enough blitzes and has the depth in the front seven to make that tempo work.

THE BAD NEWS: Louisville is again one of the youngest teams in the country after starting 11 true freshmen at some point last season. Another slow start is possible, especially if the O-line takes too much time to jell.

OUR CALL: The schedule reads like a queue of weak sisters. Don't expect the Cardinals to be relevant nationally — this *is* the Big East — but look for this to be a title season that trampolines Louisville into top 15 consideration in 2013.

24. Boise State

Adding a MWC trophy on their way out?

You gotta go with the odds — the Broncos have finished in the Associated Press Top 25 in eight of the past 10 years, and they would have been ranked in those other two seasons if they had made one more play in the final minute of bowl losses. This is, no doubt, a reloading year for the Program That Chris Petersen Will Never Leave, but it's a good time for a transition, with thorn-in-the-side TCU off to the Big 12 and Boise State revving the engines for the Big East in 2013.

THE GOOD NEWS: The last three seasons in which Boise State has used a first-time starting quarterback, the Broncos have gone 33-2, so let's not overstate the loss of Kellen Moore. (No pressure on you, junior Joe Southwick ... or whoever.) Broncos are good and deep at OL, WR and DB.

THE BAD NEWS: Boise State went 50-3 with Moore as the starting quarterback, so let's not minimize his departure. Standouts Tyrone Crawford, Shea McClellin and Billy Winn are gone from the defensive line, and Doug Martin leaves big shoes to fill at tailback.

OUR CALL: We'd expect one stumble somewhere after losing an opener at Michigan State, but that's it. Clear room in the trophy case for a MWC crown.

25. Nebraska

Tough schedule makes more wins unlikely

The Cornhuskers rooted around in their new conference last season, digging up a couple of highlights to go with three Big Ten losses. Anybody will take a win over Ohio State whenever they can get it, and knocking off Michigan State was a nice feather. The lopsided road losses to Wisconsin and Michigan were another matter. Nebraska knows what it has to do, but upward mobility depends on QB Taylor Martinez, whose spring footwork in the passing game was said to be much improved.

THE GOOD NEWS: Senior Rex Burkhead is one of the most reliable running backs in the country, and the Huskers have the depth to lighten his workload, if needed. Martinez has, at tantalizing times, looked like a Heisman candidate because of his superb running.

THE BAD NEWS: Nebraska's defense will miss the tackling of LB Lavonte David (133 stops) and the attitude of CB Alfonzo Dennard. The Big Ten scheduling misses are Indiana, Illinois and Purdue, expected to be among the league's worst teams.

OUR CALL: Nebraska went 9-4 last season and finished No. 24 in the AP poll after a Capital One Bowl loss to South Carolina. Sounds about right again this season.

RATING THE TEAMS 1-124

1. LSU	SEC	1	6. Georgia	SEC	3	11. South Carolina	SEC	5	16. Oklahoma State	Big 12	4	21. Stanford	Pac-12	3
2. USC	Pac-12	1	7. Michigan	Big Ten	1	12. Michigan State	Big Ten	2	17. Wisconsin	Big Ten	4	22. Kansas State	Big 12	6
3. Alabama	SEC	2	8. Florida State	ACC	1	13. Clemson	ACC	2	18. Virginia Tech	ACC	3	23. Louisville	Big East	1
4. Oklahoma	Big 12	1	9. Arkansas	SEC	4	14. Ohio State	Big Ten	3	19. Texas	Big 12	5	24. Boise State	MWC	1
5. Oregon	Pac-12	2	10. West Virginia	Big 12	2	15. TCU	Big 12	3	20. Florida	SEC	6	25. Nebraska	Big Ten	5

No.	Team	Conf.	Conf. Rank	
26.	Utah	Pac-12	4	QB Jordan Wynn is back from injury as Utes begin second Pac season.
27.	Penn State	Big Ten	6	Critical year; O'Brien needs to show that Penn State is still Penn State.
28.	NC State	ACC	4	Great DBs, fine QB. Could challenge in Atlantic Divison after 8-5 season.
29.	Texas A&M	SEC	7	Big "If:" If the Aggies finish games stronger, they'll be fine, even in SEC.
30.	Missouri	SEC	8	Mizzou, QB James Franklin ready to challenge SEC with spread-option.
31.	Auburn	SEC	9	Maturing team should win at least eight games again.
32.	Washington	Pac-12	5	QB Keith Price, WR-KR Kasen Williams are supreme talents. Oh, that D ...
33.	Notre Dame	Ind	1	Who's the QB? Schedule makes it hard to win more than eight.
34.	Virginia	ACC	5	Coach Mike London has made major strides in two years in program.
35.	Georgia Tech	ACC	6	Paul Johnson is 21-11 in ACC in 4 years, second-best mark in league.
36.	Rutgers	Big East	2	Defense could be even better than last year's top 15 unit.
37.	Tennessee	SEC	10	After worst-ever 1-7 SEC record, Vols should rebound to win 7-8.
38.	UCF	CUSA	1	Loaded backfield helps push the Knights to top of Conference USA.
39.	BYU	Ind	2	Cougars try to take advantage of QB Riley Nelson's good wheels.
40.	Texas Tech	Big 12	7	Experienced group back, but gave up 256 pts in 5-game skid to end '11.
41.	Iowa	Big Ten	7	Hawkeyes have been just 4-4 in the Big Ten in each of past two years.
42.	Purdue	Big Ten	8	Veteran team could inch forward again after 7-6 season.
43.	Baylor	Big 12	8	With Mr. Heisman gone, it's back to scratching for any old bowl.
44.	Pittsburgh	Big East	3	The play of QB Tino Sunseri and a rebuilt defense are the keys.
45.	North Carolina	ACC	7	Larry Fedora needs to bring stability back to Heels.
46.	Mississippi State	SEC	11	QB Tyler Russell holds the key to making a move higher.
47.	Cincinnati	Big East	4	Bearcats could go far with QB Munchie Legaux at the helm.
48.	UCLA	Pac-12	6	An NFL retread in Los Angeles? Hey, this could work!
49.	Miami	ACC	8	Al Golden's contract runs through 2020; 2012 not one to remember.
50.	Cal	Pac-12	7	Progress from QB Zach Maynard would shake Bears from doldrums.
51.	Washington State	Pac-12	8	Welcome, Mike Leach. The era of the Cougs being boring is over.
52.	Vanderbilt	SEC	12	Competed and went to bowl in James Franklin's first season.
53.	SMU	CUSA	2	RB Zach Line returns after scoring 17 touchdowns last season.
54.	Wake Forest	ACC	9	Third-year starting QB Tanner Price helps keep Deacs competitive.
55.	Northwestern	Big Ten	9	Looking at something right around .500 for the third straight year.
56.	Connecticut	Big East	5	RB Lyle McCombs and experienced defense provide bowl hopes.
57.	South Florida	Big East	6	Led again by QB B.J. Daniels, Bulls try to shed second-half slump.
58.	Iowa State	Big 12	9	One of the nation's best linebacker tandems give reason to tune in.
59.	Arizona	Pac-12	9	RichRod motivated to prove Michigan flop wasn't all on him.
60.	Ole Miss	SEC	13	Getting buried in the league with 15 consecutive losses in SEC play.
61.	Kentucky	SEC	14	Had five-year bowl streak snapped in Joker Phillips' second year.
62.	Illinois	Big Ten	10	Tim Beckman takes over after the Zooker hit a brick wall at midseason.
63.	Arizona State	Pac-12	10	QBs new. Run game solid. Todd Graham ... just renting?
64.	Marshall	CUSA	3	Herd rallying in the right direction, should make back-to-back bowls.
65.	Oregon State	Pac-12	11	Rough patch (eight wins in two years) for respected coach Mike Riley.
66.	Tulsa	CUSA	4	Hurricane lost QB G.J. Kinne from team than went 7-1 in the league.
67.	Houston	CUSA	5	Kevin Sumlin didn't leave cupboard bare, but 13-1 ain't happening.
68.	Ohio	MAC	1	QB Tyler Tettleton back to lead the Bobcats, who went 10-4 in 2011.
69.	Duke	ACC	10	Not enough gimmies on the schedule for first bowl since 1994.
70.	Southern Miss	CUSA	6	First-year coach Ellis Johnson could be tripped up by QB issues.
71.	Boston College	ACC	11	Star power lacking: Luke Kuechly gone, Montel Harris ailing (knee).
72.	Louisiana Tech	WAC	1	Sonny Dykes has program on rise; clear favorite in watered-down WAC.
73.	FIU	Sun Belt	1	No more T.Y. Hilton, but looks like a bowl for third straight year.
74.	Minnesota	Big Ten	11	Check the sked: Gophers could be 4-0, surpassing 2011's win total.
75.	Syracuse	Big East	7	Re-addition of Temple to Big East keeps Orange out of last.
76.	Maryland	ACC	12	After 2-10 disaster, Terps young and inexperienced across the board.
77.	Colorado	Pac-12	12	New QB, new RB, standout WR Paul Richardson tore ACL in spring.
78.	Fresno State	MWC	2	Has league's best run-pass combination as it moves to MWC.
79.	Wyoming	MWC	3	Sophomore QB Brett Smith is a keeper; Pokes went 8-5 last season.
80.	Navy	Ind	3	Mids try to get back into bowl biz after seven-year streak snapped.
81.	San Diego State	MWC	4	Aztecs will have to reload on offense before 2013 move to Big East.
82.	Utah State	WAC	2	Will carry over momentum from strong finish (plus bowl) to 2011.
83.	Nevada	MWC	5	Pack went 4-1 last season against current members of the MWC.
84.	Kent State	MAC	2	Lots of experience is a positive ...if it means woeful offense gets better.
85.	Western Michigan	MAC	3	Having QB Alex Carder is a good start, but questions abound on D.
86.	Air Force	MWC	6	Falcons try for sixth straight bowl with new key players in backfield.
87.	Indiana	Big Ten	12	Kevin Wilson's only win in debut season came vs. South Carolina State.
88.	Hawaii	MWC	7	At long last, Norm Chow is a head coach for the first time.
89.	Kansas	Big 12	10	And so begins the second act of Charlie Weis' coaching career.
90.	Arkansas State	Sun Belt	2	Gus Malzahn brings his spead offense to first head coaching gig.
91.	Northern Illinois	MAC	4	Key personnel move: Jordan Lynch replaces QB Chandler Harnisch.
92.	San Jose State	WAC	3	With decent QB play (a huge "if") Spartans could be bowl-bound.
93.	Colorado State	MWC	8	Hiring head coach Jim McElwain (Alabama OC) is a good start.
94.	La.-Monroe	Sun Belt	3	Getting close to a "win-or-else" situation for coach Todd Berry.
95.	Toledo	MAC	5	Matt Campbell, at 32, becomes the youngest coach in the FBS.
96.	Louisiana	Sun Belt	4	Mark Hudspeth led team to New Orleans Bowl win in first season.
97.	New Mexico State	WAC	4	Aggies benefit from WAC departures of Nevada, Hawaii, Fresno State.
98.	Troy	Sun Belt	5	Offense should be better ... defense, well, maybe not.
99.	Western Kentucky	Sun Belt	6	Taking a small step back after last year's surprising 7-5 run.
100.	Ball State	MAC	6	A 6-6 season rated as a surprise in coach Pete Lembo's first year.
101.	North Texas	Sun Belt	7	Not looking like Mean Green's first winning season since 2004.
102.	Idaho	WAC	5	Vandals lost too much on both lines to keep pace with WAC leaders.
103.	Middle Tennessee	Sun Belt	8	Must come together on D for an outside shot at breaking even.
104.	Miami (Ohio)	MAC	7	Followed up 2010 MAC title with a plunge to 4-8 overall.
105.	Army	Ind	4	Coach Rich Ellerson looking for first win vs. rivals Navy, Air Force (0-6).
106.	Temple	Big East	8	Bad timing: Rebuilding year comes as Owls move back into Big East.
107.	Tulane	CUSA	7	Curtis Johnson takes over a team that is 31-76 in the past nine years.
108.	East Carolina	CUSA	8	Losing QB Dominique Davis tough for a team that was 5-7 a year ago.
109.	Bowling Green	MAC	8	QB Matt Schilz threw for 3,024 yards and 28 touchdowns last year.
110.	Rice	CUSA	9	Defense has been too shaky to make a move in Conference USA.
111.	UTEP	CUSA	10	Tough schedule has Miners headed to seventh losing season in a row.
112.	Buffalo	MAC	9	Branden Oliver rushed for 1,395 yards last season.
113.	Florida Atlantic	Sun Belt	9	Carl Pelini second FAU coach ever, replacing Howard Schnellenberger.
114.	UAB	CUSA	11	Hiring of Garrick McGee creates a little buzz around the Blazers.
115.	Akron	MAC	10	Terry Bowden is a bold hire for a program that had little left to lose.
116.	Eastern Michigan	MAC	11	Alex Gillett is most experienced QB in the MAC.
117.	Central Michigan	MAC	12	It's been back-to-back 3-9 campaigns for the Chippewas.
118.	UNLV	MWC	9	Bobby Hauck is 4-21 in two seasons, with no road victories.
119.	Memphis	CUSA	12	Bar set low for Justin Fuente; predecessor Larry Porter was 3-21.
120.	New Mexico	MWC	10	Bob Davie jumped from the ESPN booth into a fine mess.
121.	South Alabama	Sun Belt	10	It's the final year of the Jags' transition to the FBS.
122.	Texas State	WAC	6	Dennis Franchione starting second year of second tour in San Marcos.
123.	UMass	MAC	13	Basically, a .500-level FCS program for the past four seasons.
124.	UT-San Antonio	WAC	7	Potential here. Roadrunners will move to C-USA after year in WAC.

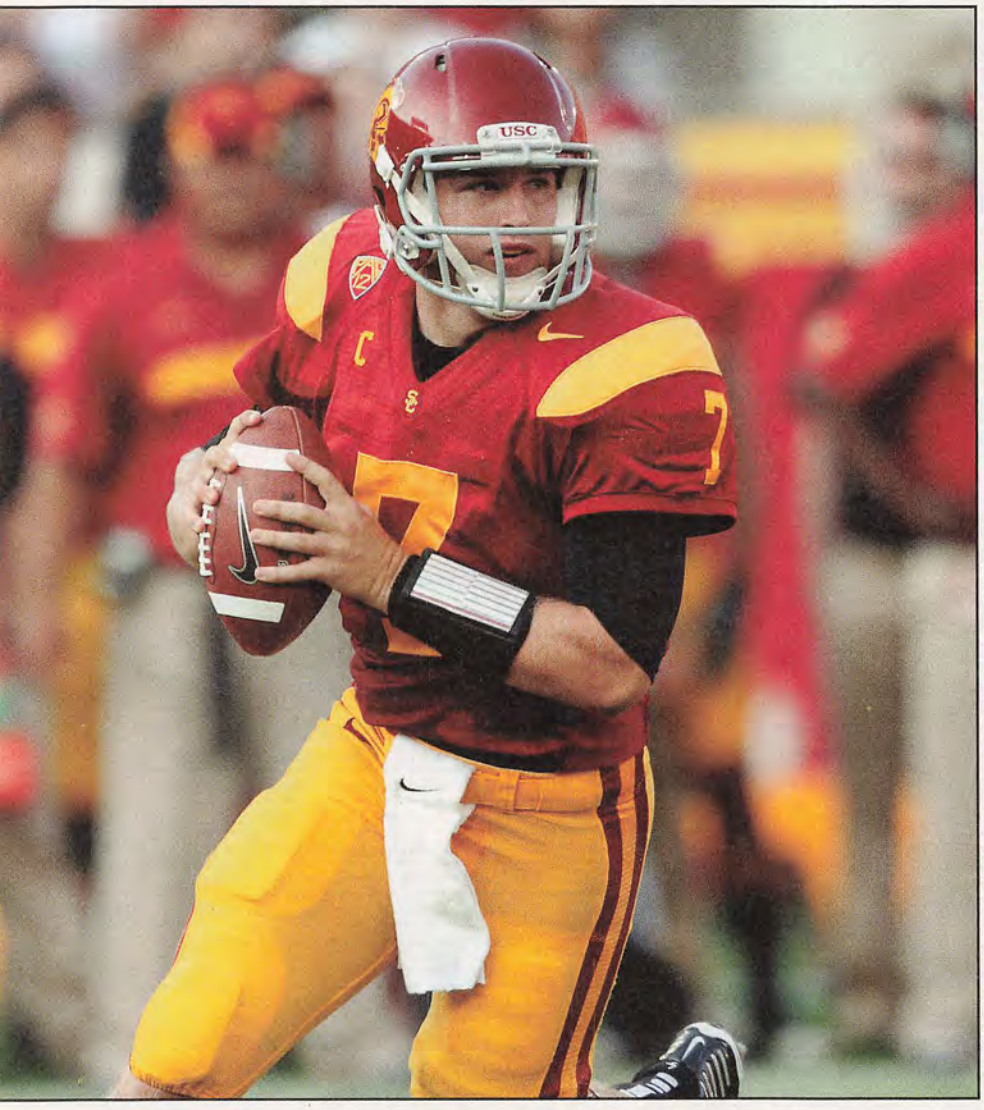


Photo by Steve Beyer

Barkley isn't finished making memories at USC

By Scott Wolf

It is not enough for USC quarterback Matt Barkley to be the Heisman Trophy frontrunner and potential No. 1 NFL draft pick. At the same time he gets hyped for a record-setting senior season, he's also looking to have a lot of fun.

When Barkley decided to return to USC he did not merely call coach Lane Kiffin. He orchestrated a dramatic moment, asking Kiffin to drive to his house just before Christmas.

After Kiffin walked in the house, Barkley handed him a handmade cardboard ornament that showed the pair embracing after the USC-Colorado game, where the star quarterback set the Trojans' single-game record for touchdown passes. A caption read, "2011 Great Memories."

The ornament barely impressed a cynical Kiffin, who said, "Cool ornament, Matt."

But Barkley, *Lindy's* Offensive Player of the Year, told Kiffin to turn it over and read another caption: "One more year. To the memories next year."

"I tried to be all sad," Barkley said of the way he was trying to fool Kiffin. "But I can't hold a straight face."

Or as Kiffin says, "Matt can't lie."

Barkley is one of the most driven and competitive athletes to play for USC in the past 15 years, but that is complemented by a boyish nature that does anything for a smile.

"I really did want him to stay," said his sister, Lainy, who also attends USC. "It's so fun being on campus with him."

Barkley's honesty and good nature (and his strong arm) are reasons USC feels so positive about its quest for a national title. And even he will not deny it.

"Looking at the team we have, it's definitely something special," Barkley said. "We're on the ride."

That is the type of comment that makes Kiffin wince because he likes to say, "You won't hear us talking about a national championship."

Barkley's teammates, however, love his directness.

"Matt always kept us energized because he is positive," former USC tailback Marc Tyler said. "He knew how to motivate us and willed us to win during games last season."

Being a motivator is a natural talent for Barkley, who always finds ways to keep things fresh and interesting.

Barkley took 15 of his teammates on a trip to Haiti to help build homes, a trip that illustrated Barkley's penchant for finding ways to make his teammates bond. It is a stark contrast to the last quarterback with this much hype at USC (Matt Leinart), who avoided much interaction with his teammates during his senior year.

"I've never been out of the country," USC defensive end Devon Ken-

nard said. "I think it was a great idea by Matt."

It is not an unusual trip for Barkley. After his sophomore year, with no bowl game because of NCAA sanctions, he went to Nigeria with his family to help the needy.

Going to Haiti appealed to Barkley more than being an NFL rookie. He knew he was going to be a top 10 draft choice but said, "I was meant to be at USC."

By the end of this season, Barkley appears to be meant to be USC's leader in career passing and total offense. He also will be the school's first three-time captain.

"He's got a chance to blow all these school records out of the water," Kiffin said.

USC will open its new $100-million football center this year named after legendary coach John McKay, but the reverence for Barkley already led to another possible title.

"The Matt Barkley Center sounds better," USC athletic director Pat Haden joked.

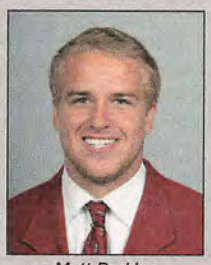
Barkley would turn down that offer. He might enjoy being in the spotlight, but dislikes over-the-top presentations. When he announced his return to USC, he was surprised the school arranged for the school band, song girls and the Heisman trophies flanking him inside Heritage Hall.

"That's not me," Barkley said. "That's not what I'm about. I just didn't want that image of myself. Hopefully, we'll add another (Heisman Trophy) here later, but as of now, we have some work to do first."

What Barkley wants is to win and go to a bowl game, preferably the BCS title game. He endured the Trojans' two-year bowl ban and wants his senior year to make up for NCAA sanctions.

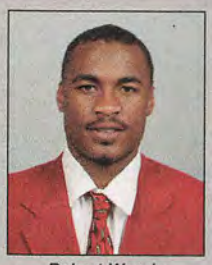
"We've waited a long time and it's been frustrating sometimes not going to a bowl, but we never let it define us," Barkley said. "We can make this year worth remembering and we've got a team to do it. I can't wait."

OFFENSE


Matt Barkley

Montee Ball

Marcus Lattimore


Robert Woods

Sammy Watkins

Tyler Eifert

FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Matt Barkley	6-2	230	Sr.	USC
RB	Montee Ball	5-11	212	Sr.	Wisconsin
RB	Marcus Lattimore	6-0	218	Jr.	South Carolina
WR	Robert Woods	6-1	190	Jr.	USC
WR	Sammy Watkins	6-1	200	So.	Clemson
TE	Tyler Eifert	6-6	251	Sr.	Notre Dame
C	Barrett Jones	6-5	302	Sr.	Alabama
OL	Alex Hurst	6-6	340	Sr.	LSU
OL	Luke Joeckel	6-6	310	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Ricky Wagner	6-6	322	Sr.	Wisconsin
OL	Chance Warmack	6-3	320	Sr.	Alabama
PK	Caleb Sturgis	5-11	187	Sr.	Florida

SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Denard Robinson	6-0	195	Sr.	Michigan
RB	Knile Davis	6-0	226	Jr.	Arkansas
RB	Ray Graham	5-9	195	Sr.	Pittsburgh
WR	Keenan Allen	6-3	206	Jr.	Cal
WR	Marquess Wilson	6-4	183	Jr.	Washington State
TE	Philip Lutzenkirchen	6-5	250	Sr.	Auburn
C	Dalton Freeman	6-5	285	Sr.	Clemson
OL	Omoregie Uzzi	6-3	300	Sr.	Georgia Tech
OL	Gabe Ikard	6-4	295	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Chris Faulk	6-6	325	Jr.	LSU
OL	Taylor Lewan	6-8	302	Jr.	Michigan
PK	Dustin Hopkins	6-2	190	Sr.	Florida State

Barrett Jones

Alex Hurst

Luke Joeckle

Ricky Wagner

Chance Warmack

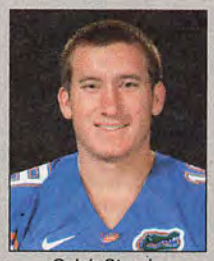

Caleb Sturgis

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

There's No Limiting this Honey Badger

By Dennis Dodd

Tyrann Mathieu has seldom let boundaries define him. Why start now?

LSU's All-American cornerback starred at St. Augustine High in New Orleans' tough Orleans Parish. The practice field was a public park. The field was not lined. There were no goalposts. Still, he made it his own place to make the big time.

"It's part of the culture," said LSU running backs coach Frank Wilson, a "St. Aug" grad and New Orleans recruiting savant. "To those kids, they don't ever see it as, 'We don't have lines.' It's not an issue.

"It's not like they're sitting around there like, 'We're deprived.'"

So how hard could St. Aug be? Neighborhood residents, some casually smoking pot, would watch after the players at practice. On occasion, coach Dave Johnson would have to yell, "Get down" when a particularly dangerous police chase buzzed by.

Formally adopted last year, Mathieu was raised since the age of 5 by his aunt and uncle. FoxSports.com reported earlier this year that his birth father is serving time for murder.

Unlined field? Not a big deal.

More like unlimited potential for the tenacious Honey Badger.

So when Mathieu left Orleans Parish for Baton Rouge at age 17, he was ready for the big time. He flourished even prior to his freshman year. Usually casual 7-on-7 drills became a battleground for a kid longing to prove himself.

LSU veterans remember Mathieu making every play, tight-roping to stay inbounds after interceptions. Skinning knees, bruising elbows. This was a tryout in itself for the skinny 5-9 cover guy.

"He wanted to prove his worth," Wilson said. "To prove, 'I belong here.'"

We know now, don't we?

In a breakout 2011, Mathieu earned respect and that unforgettable nickname — Honey Badger. His accomplishments got him to New York City, where he finished fifth in the Heisman voting. He won the Bednarik Award for National Defensive Player of the Year. Mathieu became perhaps the best player at his position — certainly the one with the most impact — since Charles Woodson.

As a junior, he's *Lindy's* Preseason Defensive Player of the Year. Let's just say he's not stopping there.

"I just think mentally, in my mind, I was always a step ahead of the game," he said. "Not to take anything away from other players, I was just always confident in myself. I could make the best plays."

In redefining the position — at least in 2011 — Mathieu became master of what became dubbed "Badger Plays." In 26 career games, he has four interceptions, 11 forced fumbles, eight fumble recoveries and two punt returns for touchdowns. That adds up to 25 Badger Plays, almost one per game.

"It's almost like split personalities," Wilson said. "On the field, he has this bravado about himself, this swag, for lack of a better word. Off the field, he's humble and almost shy."

When the lights come on, he is the 5-9, 180-pound overachiever. The everyman Honey Badger.

Defensive coordinator John Chavis came up with the nickname returning from a game at West Virginia. A viral YouTube video sprang up showing how nature's real Honey Badger tenaciously

takes on dangerous prey.

Mathieu's cult of personality was such that the Heisman Trust even overlooked his one-game suspension during the season. Officially, LSU said it was for a violation of team rules. ESPN reported that Mathieu and two teammates had tested positive for synthetic marijuana.

"I think I got punished," Mathieu said. "I think I definitely did."

That barely diminished how the adopted son of a UPS truck driver burrowed his way into LSU hearts. With the season in the balance, he led the Tigers back from back-to-back double-digit deficits against Arkansas and in the SEC title game against Georgia.

With his team down 14-0 against the Hogs, Mathieu returned a punt 92 yards for a score. Georgia was up 10-0 in Atlanta, when Honey Badger once again sparked the comeback. A 62-yard punt return for a touchdown ended with Mathieu apparently not even scoring. Replays seemed to indicate that he tossed the ball to an official before crossing the goal line.

"I could see the referee looking at me kind of strange," Mathieu said. "I'll be sure the next time to make sure I cross the goal line."

When you're on that much of a roll, apparently even the replay booth is in awe.

Mathieu wasn't even allowed to return punts until his senior year at St. Aug. Because of his size, he hadn't been a star prospect on the camp circuit. But Wilson saw something. Working for Tennessee at the time, Wilson begged then-coach Lane Kiffin to offer Mathieu. No go.

To get him more attention, Wilson suggested to Johnson — now at Tulane — to feature Mathieu. Basically, Johnson created a few ways to make Mathieu's uncommon skills readily apparent. Then, Mathieu garnered some invitations to summer camps, where he became a national-level recruit.

"Unfortunately, I can't take a knife and cut him open and allow you to see the heart that was in him," Wilson said. "You can't measure what he has."

In a way, fans, media and teammates already have.

DEFENSE

Sam Montgomery

Kawann Short

Star Lotulelei

Brandon Jenkins

Jarvis Jones

Manti Te'o

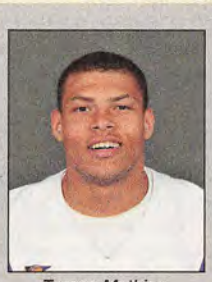
FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Sam Montgomery	6-4	245	Jr.	LSU
DL	Kawann Short	6-3	310	Sr.	Purdue
DL	Star Lotulelei	6-4	325	Sr.	Utah
DL	Brandon Jenkins	6-3	260	Sr.	Florida State
LB	Jarvis Jones	6-3	241	Sr.	Georgia
LB	Manti Te'o	6-2	255	Sr.	Notre Dame
LB	Gerald Hodges	6-2	233	Sr.	Penn State
DB	Tyrann Mathieu	5-9	175	Jr.	LSU
DB	David Amerson	6-3	194	Jr.	NC State
DB	T.J. McDonald	6-3	205	Sr.	USC
DB	Eric Reid	6-2	208	Jr.	LSU
P	Brad Wing	6-3	184	So.	LSU

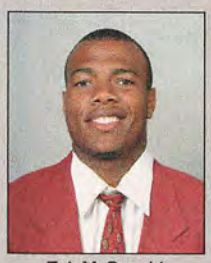
SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	William Gholston	6-7	275	Jr.	Michigan State
DL	Alex Okafor	6-4	260	Sr.	Texas
DL	Joe Vellano	6-1	285	Sr.	Maryland
DL	Barkevious Mingo	6-5	240	Jr.	LSU
LB	Chase Thomas	6-4	245	Sr.	Stanford
LB	A.J. Klein	6-2	244	Sr.	Iowa State
LB	Khaseem Greene	6-1	220	Sr.	Rutgers
DB	Johnny Adams	5-11	175	Sr.	Michigan State
DB	Nigel Malone	5-10	185	Sr.	Kansas State
DB	Robert Lester	6-2	210	Sr.	Alabama
DB	Bacarri Rambo	6-0	218	Sr.	Georgia
P	Ryan Allen	6-2	215	Sr.	Louisiana Tech

Gerald Hodges


Tyrann Mathieu

David Amerson


T.J. McDonald

Eric Reid

Brad Wing

PLAYER RATINGS

QUARTERBACKS

Robinson adds 'leader' to his role as UM star

DENARD ROBINSON

Photo by Scott Boehm

The wide, effervescent smile that once defined Denard Robinson as much as his lightning-quick feet isn't as omnipresent as it once was.

The grin is still part of the package, evidence that the Michigan quarterback is as calm as on the first play from scrimmage in his career, when he turned a mishandled snap into a improvisational touchdown sprint.

But time, along with self-analysis and refinement, has changed Robinson.

The once shy personality has been replaced with an assertive demeanor. Once all smiles, Robinson is now businesslike and focused.

Although outside criticism persists, suggesting he doesn't have what it takes to play quarterback at the next level, Robinson remains focused on what time he has left in Ann Arbor. That would be the job description for his senior season, which requires him to take charge and hold his teammates accountable. That is, to be less of a pupil and more of a teacher.

"He's taking on more of a leadership role, and that's something that's exciting for me," offensive coordinator Al Borges said. "That's exciting for all of us."

Once more comfortable in the back of the room, Robinson is at now the head of the pack, willing to step to the forefront to help deliver the Wolverines' first Big Ten championship since 2004.

"I don't do a lot of yelling and patting people on the butt," Robinson said. "Sometimes, you have to get up in them, help them out and give them encouragement.

"You can't always be nice to them — I can't always have a smile on my face."

That face has also been the face of Michigan football since he took over at quarterback in 2010. The facial expressions have evolved over time.

Last season, a change in offensive philosophy changed Robinson's main duties, challenging him to run less and evolve into a more complete quarterback.

But there were growing pains. As Michigan flourished during an 11-2 season, capped by a Sugar Bowl victory, Robinson struggled with consistency. Despite flashes of brilliance, Robinson completed only 55 percent of his passes and was intercepted 15 times.

"That's not acceptable as a quarterback," Robinson said.

Borges, who adjusted his philosophies to accommodate Robinson's skills, impressed on his star quarterback that things had to change: It's time to eliminate turnovers and connect on more passes.

"He's made a marked improvement," Borges said. "There are still errors here and there, but they're less. As he goes and understands better and better, you're going to get a better product."

And when he doesn't meet the standard, it's Robinson — not Borges — who does the correcting.

With the extra effort, Robinson became more decisive and improved his accuracy, cutting down how much he threw off his back foot.

He also took a step forward as a leader.

The trait isn't one that comes naturally to the normally soft-spoken Robinson, whose teammates once struggled to understand him in the huddle. But over time, he made an impression on those around him.

"He has been more outgoing this season," receiver Roy Roundtree said. "Being a quarterback, that's what it takes, because everyone is looking up to the quarterback. We take real impact in being a senior and taking leadership — just like (last year's) seniors did.

"We're just trying to accomplish something better."

For Robinson, making his team better means making himself better. While remaining the focal point of his team and the school's resident Big Man On Campus — even earning him a shout-out from visiting President Barack Obama — Robinson has made self-improvement a main priority.

Both as a quarterback and a leader.

Ask how much his passing has improved, and Robinson characterizes the change as night and day. Bring up his tendency to be more vocal, and his all-business persona appears, understanding it's now part of who he is.

"I'm taking on a leadership role, trying to be the best quarterback I can be for the team," Robinson said. "Right now, I'm just trying to get better at everything."

And that's got everyone around him smiling from ear to ear.

— Jeff Arnold

TOP QUARTERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Matt Barkley**	Sr.	USC
	Enters season with 9,054 passing yards, 80 TDs ... and looking for a ring.		
2.	**Denard Robinson**	Sr.	Michigan
	Who cares if he might not be a next-level QB? He's a thrill-maker.		
3.	**Tyler Wilson**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Sky's the limit, but his two lowest passing days came vs. LSU, Bama.		
4.	**Geno Smith**	Sr.	West Virginia
	Facing better competition, but a repeat (4,385 yards, 31 TDs) is doable.		
5.	**Landry Jones**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Has 12,379 career yards and something to prove after late-season slump.		
6.	**Aaron Murray**	Jr.	Georgia
	With 35 TD passes, just needs 14 to set Georgia school record.		
7.	**Collin Klein**	Sr.	Kansas State
	Such a dynamic runner, we almost put him on our all-purpose list.		
8.	**Tajh Boyd**	Jr.	Clemson
	The All-ACC QB is just scratching his potential after 33-TD season.		
9.	**Tyler Bray**	Jr.	Tennessee
	Has the arm that makes scouts drool ... now, he needs to win a big game.		
10.	**Logan Thomas**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	The one-time reluctant QB set school mark with 3,482 total yards in '11.		
11.	**Keith Price**	Jr.	Washington
	More than kept pace with RG III in wild, wild Alamo Bowl loss.		
12.	**James Franklin**	Jr.	Missouri
	Had 3,846 total yards last year in Big 12. What's the SEC conversion rate?		
13.	**AJ McCarron**	Jr.	Alabama
	If Saban says the word, title-winning QB can carry more of the load.		
14.	**Casey Pachall**	Jr.	TCU
	Super debut as starter (2,911 yards, 25 TDs), with top WRs coming back.		
15.	**EJ Manuel**	Sr.	Florida State
	Never got launched as full-time starter last year (injuries, inconsistent).		
16.	**Bryn Renner**	Jr.	North Carolina
	Strong, accurate thrower led ACC in passing efficiency (159.4 rating).		
17.	**Braxton Miller**	So.	Ohio State
	Urban says he loves Miller's "work ethic" ... and about 100 other things.		
18.	**Taylor Martinez**	Jr.	Nebraska
	If he truly has fixed some of the deficiencies in his throwing motion ...		
19.	**Seth Doege**	Sr.	Texas Tech
	Huge numbers, but tailed off in the second half of the season.		
20.	**Jeff Tuel**	Sr.	Washington State
	Betting he holds off Connor Halliday for the keys to Leach's attack.		
21.	**Mike Glennon**	Sr.	NC State
	Big finish gave him 31 TDs passes; only Philip Rivers had more at State.		
22.	**Alex Carder**	Sr.	Western Michigan
	Carrying the flag for MAC QBs; averaged 322.8 yards per game in 2011.		
23.	**Derek Carr**	Jr.	Fresno State
	David Carr's kid bro should thrive in more of a spread look for 'Dogs.		
24.	**Connor Shaw**	Jr.	South Carolina
	Went 8-1 as starter, got better in read-option, didn't vex Spurrier.		
25.	**Zach Mettenberger**	Jr.	LSU
	Maybe he belongs on list, maybe not. Will be fascinating, either way.		

PLAYER RATINGS

RUNNING BACKS

Ball returns to be better than last year's No. 1 RB

MONTEE BALL

Photo by Joe Robbins

Nobody came up to his face and said it, but Montee Ball knows some people were tempted to do so.

When the Wisconsin running back made the surprising decision to return for his senior year, he read and heard a lot of comments about what a huge mistake he was making.

How could he possibly improve on his 2011 season, when he was a Heisman Trophy finalist and led the Badgers to a second straight Rose Bowl? What about the risk of injury? Didn't he know running backs have notoriously short NFL shelf lives and shouldn't waste carries at the college level?

In announcing his decision to return, Ball admitted he was making "a pretty huge gamble."

While he knew all of the arguments against returning, they were trumped by two things he couldn't get out of his mind.

The first was outdoing an NFL Draft evaluation that projected him as a third-round pick. "I do believe I'm better than the third round," he said.

The second was the four-year commitment he made to the Badgers when he signed.

"My character speaks for itself," Ball said in the spring. "I'm true to my word. That's why I decided to stay here and help this team win. I signed a letter of intent to stay (four years)."

Ball told the running backs of his decision the day before the Rose Bowl, then informed the rest of the team in the locker room, following the heartbreaking 45-38 loss to Oregon.

For a while, it appeared as if Ball might be the only one returning. Six assistant coaches bolted for new jobs in January. Wisconsin sent a school-record eight players to the scouting combine, the second-highest total of any school in the country.

But Ball placed his trust in Badgers coach Bret Bielema and weathered the turmoil. Bielema found new coaches, and the Badgers go into the season hoping to make school history with a third consecutive Big Ten title.

"From day one, when I told (Bielema) to his face, I decided to stay, I had a lot of faith in him — and I still do," Ball said. "He picked the right coaches. They're really doing a great job finding a bunch of young players who are going to help us."

Ball's show of faith was a strong declaration about the program's direction. He also backed up his vow to get better with his performance in winter workouts. Strength coaches set up six individual stations, where players competed one-on-one in a variety of agility drills. Ball went undefeated.

"He was challenged more than anybody," running backs coach Thomas Hammock said. "He won every one. He was always at the front of the line, pushing the guys."

Ball worked in the spring to polish minor flaws in his game, focusing on pass protection and becoming even more explosive out of cuts.

"What I've seen right here (in the spring), Montee will be a better player," Bielema said.

Ball led the nation with 1,923 rushing yards last season, and his 39 total touchdowns tied the NCAA record set by Barry Sanders in 1988. Bielema said Ball could be a better all-around player in 2012, even if he doesn't match his gaudy 2011 statistics.

"He's not trying to produce the same numbers," Bielema said. "He's not trying to do anything other than try to win football games and play his best football."

And those critics, who said he was crazy for coming back? They provide even more motivation for Ball's relentless pursuit of improvement.

"It's a lot of fuel," he said.

Hammock tells his players, "The enemy of great is being good." Ball refuses to be satisfied and is determined to drag his teammates along with him.

"That's what I'm striving to be — great," he said. "You don't know how hard I'm going to work and how hard I'm going to push these players to make this thing work. You never know what a player is capable of doing."

— Tom Mulhern

TOP RUNNING BACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Montee Ball**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	A 2011 Heisman finalist after rushing for 1,923 yards and 33 TDs.		
2.	**Marcus Lattimore**	Jr.	South Carolina
	Let's assume a healthy knee; punishing runner will rip through SEC.		
3.	**Knile Davis**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Remember, he had 1,028 yards in final seven games of 2010 season.		
4.	**Ray Graham**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
	Was nation's second-leading rusher before knee injury at midseason.		
5.	**Joseph Randle**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	Scatback seeks same open spaces with new weapons at QB, WR.		
6.	**Giovani Bernard**	So.	North Carolina
	All-ACC freshman had 1,253 yards and 13 touchdowns.		
7.	**Fitzgerald Toussaint**	Jr.	Michigan
	Ready to build off sensational second half of the 2011 season.		
8.	**Stepfan Taylor**	Sr.	Stanford
	Had "quiet" consecutive 1,000-yard seasons in Andrew Luck's shadow.		
9.	**Robbie Rouse**	Sr.	Fresno State
	Big-time workhorse; carried 36 times for 169 yards vs. Nebraska.		
10.	**Andre Ellington**	Sr.	Clemson
	Rushed for 1,178 yards last season; needs a full year of health.		
11.	**Rex Burkhead**	Sr.	Nebraska
	Not as flashy as some, but he's good for north of 1,300 yards again.		
12.	**John White IV**	Sr.	Utah
	As a JC transfer last season, set a school record with 1,519 rushing yards.		
13.	**Kenjon Barner**	Sr.	Oregon
	Main man now? Went for 939 yards and 11 TDs as backup last season.		
14.	**Eddie Lacy**	Jr.	Alabama
	From Mark Ingram to Trent Richardson ... and here's the next Bama star.		
15.	**Zach Line**	Sr.	SMU
	Rushed for at least 82 yards in all 10 games before injury late in 2011.		
16.	**Zac Stacy**	Sr.	Vanderbilt
	The SEC's leading returning rusher; darted for 1,193 yards, 14 TDs.		
17.	**Christine Michael**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Oft-injured and coming off ACL tear, but his ceiling is as high as any.		
18.	**Cierre Wood**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Bigger focus of offense with QB in transition; 1,102 rushing yards in 2011.		
19.	**Silas Redd**	Jr.	Penn State
	Needs to be a constant for Lions amid change to Bill O'Brien's offense.		
20.	**Isaiah Crowell**	So.	Georgia
	Touted recruit was SEC Freshman of the Year with 850 yards.		
21.	**Curtis McNeal**	Sr.	USC
	Bulked up to help durability; averaged 6.9 yards a carry last year.		
22.	**Le'Veon Bell**	Jr.	Michigan State
	Potential for more carries after 948 yards, 13 TDs in a time-share.		
23.	**Onterio McCalebb**	Sr.	Auburn
	Little guy can do it all, and should get a bigger workload this season.		
24.	**Perry Jones**	Sr.	Virginia
	His pass-catching skills (48 receptions last year) help set him apart.		
25.	**LSU's quartet**	n/a	LSU
	Take your pick: Michael Ford, Spencer Ware, Kenny Hilliard, Alfred Blue.		

'The Robert Factor' keeps Trojans looking downfield

ROBERT WOODS

Photo by John Pyle

USC wide receiver Robert Woods was a consensus All-American and finalist for the Biletnikoff Award last season, but if he needs motivation for his junior season, he needs to look no further than the comments of his coach, Lane Kiffin.

The day after USC defeated UCLA, 50-0, in the season-finale, Kiffin said Woods was "the second-best receiver" on the team, behind Marqise Lee.

TOP WIDE RECEIVERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Robert Woods**	Jr.	USC
	Can line up anywhere and create a mismatch; 111 catches last year.		
2.	**Sammy Watkins**	So.	Clemson
	Freshman season: 82 catches for 1,219 yards and 12 touchdowns.		
3.	**Keenan Allen**	Jr.	Cal
	Had 98 catches for 1,342 yards last season with half-brother at QB.		
4.	**Marquess Wilson**	Jr.	Washington State
	Uneven spring, but big-play guy has to be the focus of Mike Leach attack.		
5.	**Marqise Lee**	So.	USC
	So dangerous after the catch; should become an all-time USC great.		
6.	**Justin Hunter**	Jr.	Tennessee
	Last season's torn ACL won't stop him from becoming SEC's best.		
7.	**Kenny Stills**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Maturing player with big personality and Ryan Broyles' shoes to fill.		
8.	**Tavon Austin**	Sr.	West Virginia
	Inside WR had great spring after four-TD game vs. Clemson in bowl game.		
9.	**Cobi Hamilton**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Numbers will soar as Tyler Wilson's primary target this time around.		
10.	**Terrance Williams**	Sr.	Baylor
	A playmaker for the new QB: 59 catches, 957 yards, 11 TDs in '11.		
11.	**Da'Rick Rogers**	Jr.	Tennessee
	First-round potential, but has had his share of off-field problems.		
12.	**Stedman Bailey**	Jr.	West Virginia
	Gotta love his speed, playmaking (12 TDs) and 17.8 yards per catch.		
13.	**Malcolm Mitchell**	So.	Georgia
	Look good in the spring ... at corner? No worries, will catch plenty as WR.		
14.	**Ryan Swope**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Can he replicate 89 catches, 1,207 yards without Tannehill ... and in SEC?		
15.	**DeAndre Hopkins**	Jr.	Clemson
	Dabbled in hoops, focused on football now; 124 catches in two years.		
16.	**Tavarres King**	Sr.	Georgia
	Has a gear that can go get plenty of deep passes from Aaron Murray.		
17.	**Josh Boyce**	Jr.	TCU
	Came up big vs. Boise last season; finished 2011 with 998 yards, nine TDs.		
18.	**Emory Blake**	Sr.	Auburn
	Deep threat averaged 17.0 yards per catch last season.		
19.	**Conner Vernon**	Sr.	Duke
	Only player in ACC history with multiple seasons of 70-plus catches.		
20.	**Odell Beckham**	So.	LSU
	LSU's new go-to guy will run down deep balls from Zach Mettenberger.		

TOP TIGHT ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Tyler Eifert**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Earned some All-America honors last season (63 catches, 803 yards).		
2.	**Philip Lutzenkirchen**	Sr.	Auburn
	Makes the circus catches, blocks and comes through in the clutch.		
3.	**Jacob Pedersen**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	Made eight TD catches last season and is blossoming as a blocker.		
4.	**Austin Seferian-Jenkins**	So.	Washington
	Terrific athlete who also played Husky hoops; ready for monster season.		
5.	**Jake Stoneburner**	Sr.	Ohio State
	Remember Aaron Hernandez at Florida for Meyer? That's Stoneburner.		

*Not rated due to spring suspension: Darius Johnson, SMU

It was an odd comment. Woods set the conference receiving record (111), and led the team in receiving yards (1,292) and touchdown catches (15).

Yet, in the Trojans' rout of the Bruins, while Woods was catching 12 passes, Lee was catching 13. While Woods was amassing 113 yards and two touchdowns, Lee was piling up 224 yards and two scores. On that night, Lee was unbelievable.

"I respect what Coach Kiffin said," Woods said. "I just want to be healthy and 100 percent this year. Then I can show everyone what I'm capable of doing when I'm pain free."

Woods, you see, played with an ankle injury that bothered him the *entire* season. Even with the bad ankle, Woods did things most receivers fail to do with two healthy wheels. Just one example: He caught a short pass against Arizona and turned it into an 82-yard touchdown en route to 255 yards receiving against the Wildcats.

"He makes a lot of plays that make me look good," USC quarterback Matt Barkley said. "He's really easy to play with because he is always where he needs to be. I can depend on him every play if I need to. We have a special relationship that way."

Having an experienced playmaker like Woods, and an up-and-comer like Lee, gave Barkley two reasons to come back for his senior season.

From his first day at USC, Woods displayed special tendencies, walking everywhere with his playbook and learning the offense faster than the other freshmen. He and Barkley were immediately on the same page.

"We always had our timing down," Woods said. "It's like playing catch with someone. It's real natural."

Woods underwent ankle surgery after last season and, to ensure he is healthy this year, did not participate in spring practice.

With teams now worried about Lee, it might be impossible to double-team Woods. The duo's combined receptions (184) and receiving yards (2,435) were the most by a pair of USC receivers in a single season.

Kiffin called opposing teams' double-coverage "The Robert Factor."

"He helps us in ways I don't think people understand," Kiffin said. "Even if he only has eight receptions in a game, they're trying to take him away and it's allowing all these other guys to make plays."

Woods opened the season catching a school-record 17 passes against Minnesota, drawing ever-increasing attention from defenses.

"What's really amazing, even after all the attention they gave him, he had 33 catches in the first three games," Kiffin said.

But Woods is not just one of the nation's top receivers, he's one of the hungriest.

"There were times when Coach Kiffin said I might not play in games (because of injuries)," Woods said. "I remember everyone wanted to know if I would play against Oregon. I knew I would play. But I also knew I wasn't at my best.

"I have no doubts I will be at my best this year."

Whatever Woods does, the big question for USC fans is whether Woods will return for his senior season in 2013?

"If the NFL is there, of course you have to look into it," Woods said. "But Matt and (safety) T.J. McDonald set the standard, returning for their senior year. Me and (linebacker) Dion Bailey and a lot of guys were talking. That should be the new trend, getting your degree."

If that is what Woods really thinks, Kiffin will have no problems bestowing any title the wide receiver wants.

— Scott Wolf

PLAYER RATINGS

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

Aggies tackle is no joke to opponents

After graduating a semester early from Arlington (Texas) High, offensive lineman Luke Joeckel — perhaps the biggest prize of Texas A&M's 2010 recruiting class — enrolled in January 2010, along with his twin brother Matt, a quarterback prospect for the Aggies.

TOP CENTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Barrett Jones**	Sr.	Alabama
	Outland Trophy winner takes on a new position on Bama's talented OL.		
2.	**Dalton Freeman**	Sr.	Clemson
	All-ACC center has started 36 games in his career.		
3.	**Khaled Holmes**	Sr.	USC
	How about an All-American combination at QB and center for USC?		
4.	**Ben Habern**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Missed spring with neck injury but will be back to help lead standout OL.		
5.	**Joe Madsen**	Sr.	West Virginia
	Hasn't missed a start in his career; led team in knockdown blocks in '11.		
6.	**Travis Swanson**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Will be third-year starter; the up-front centerpiece for a prolific offense.		
7.	**T.J. Johnson**	Sr.	South Carolina
	Started all 40 games of career, with postseason awards along the way.		
8.	**Braxston Cave**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Missing last four games helped him decide to return for fifth year.		

TOP GUARDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Chance Warmack**	Sr.	Alabama
	Even with Barrett Jones at center, Warmack might be Bama's best OL.		
2.	**Omoregie Uzzi**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
	Earned All-ACC honors and checked out draft status before returning.		
3.	**Gabe Ikard**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Also excelled at center when Ben Habern was out last season.		
4.	**Alvin Bailey**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Was in the doghouse in the spring ... but has All-SEC talent.		
5.	**Larry Warford**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Two-time second-team selection to the All-SEC team.		
6.	**Jonathan Cooper**	Sr.	North Carolina
	Was rated NFLDraftScout's No. 1 senior OG prospect in spring.		
7.	**Chris McDonald**	Sr.	Michigan State
	Athletic lineman whose brother, Nick, has spent past two years in NFL.		
8.	**Lane Taylor**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	With 36 career starts, leads a revamped line in front of freshman QB.		

TOP TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Alex Hurst**	Sr.	LSU
	A coaches' All-SEC selection who mans the right side for the Tigers.		
2.	**Luke Joeckel**	Jr.	Texas A&M
	Huge potential will be tested by the big and speedy SEC pass rushers.		
3.	**Ricky Wagner**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	Has nicely followed in LT footsteps of Joe Thomas and Gabe Carimi.		
4.	**Chris Faulk**	Jr.	LSU
	Should be a eying a first-round draft grade with a big junior year.		
5.	**Taylor Lewan**	Jr.	Michigan
	Kid with big personality who is drawing comparisons to UM greats.		
6.	**Oday Aboushi**	Sr.	Virginia
	Cavs have had three first-round OTs since 2006 ... one more?		
7.	**D.J. Fluker**	Jr.	Alabama
	Might have most potential on OT list; looking lean at a scant 350 pounds.		
8.	**Justin Pugh**	Sr.	Syracuse
	All-Big East performer; has blocked for two different 1,000-yard RBs.		

LUKE JOECKEL

Photo by Doug Holleman

With Jerrod Johnson and Ryan Tannehill entrenched at quarterback entering the spring of 2010, Matt Joeckel had no illusions of playing early in his collegiate career. Because of deficiencies in the offensive line, however, Luke was regarded as a likely candidate to work his way into the starting lineup as a true freshman ... at the high-profile spot of left tackle, no less.

But when spring ball started, Joeckel was embarrassed on the practice field. His hopes of starting immediately — as well as most of his long-term dreams — were initially dashed when he could rarely even *touch* the rush linebacker in front of him.

"It was a joke, but it wasn't funny to me," the well-spoken Joeckel recalled. "I was right out of high school trying to make a big impression, and there were many times I couldn't even touch the guy.

"I'm dead serious. I remember thinking, 'Man, is this the kind of talent I'm going to see every week in the Big 12?' I was pretty happy when we started playing games and realized that not everybody I faced was like Von Miller."

Well, yeah. Miller, remember, led the nation in sacks in 2009, won the Butkus Award in 2010, and was the NFL's Defensive Rookie of the Year in 2011 after a stellar debut season with the Denver Broncos. Additionally, Miller may have placed Joeckel on the fast track in terms of his development as an offensive lineman.

"My freshman year was hard, especially in terms of just getting used to the speed compared to high school," Joeckel said. "But blocking Von Miller in spring practices helped me a ton. I had a lot of offside penalties when I first came in, but after four or five games, I started getting better."

Joeckel, a 6-6, 315-pound left tackle, soon realized that nobody else could block Miller one-on-one, consistently, either. So upon starting all 13 games as a true freshman in 2010, Joeckel struggled at times, but made major strides as the Aggies won their last six regular-season games before falling to LSU in the Cotton Bowl.

Joeckel continued his impressive development as a sophomore, emerging as the premier player on an offensive line that allowed the fewest sacks (nine) in the Big 12 in 2011.

"I felt much more comfortable last year," he said. "This year, I plan on getting better and better and building on what I've done so far."

Joeckel and fellow junior right tackle Jake Matthews, son of NFL Hall of Famer Bruce Matthews, form one of the most impressive tackle tandems in Texas A&M history. As the Aggies prepare to enter the SEC in 2012, the offensive line is undoubtedly the team's strength.

Joeckel says he is fully aware that dominant defensive line play has been one of the key characteristics of the premier teams in the SEC for many years. Nevertheless, Joeckel is confident he is prepared for anything or anyone he will face this year and beyond.

"Going to the SEC, we are playing against the best competition in the country, and it is a league known for its great defensive linemen," said Joeckel, whose father, David, was an offensive lineman at Texas Tech.

"But I am looking forward to that challenge. Jake and I are looking forward to going against those great defensive ends in the SEC. Personally, I feel like I've already played against the best of the best in Von.

"That guy is a total freak in a good way, and I was not surprised at all that he was the Defensive Rookie of the Year. He really helped me develop in a hurry and prepared me for whatever I'll face next."

— Rusty Burson

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

For LSU's Montgomery, it's 'all about the mindset,' and more

SAM MONTGOMERY

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

In the quest to become "a great LSU player," junior right defensive end Sam Montgomery said it takes "a dominant defensive mentality. ... It's all about mindset."

If that were the only requirement, there would be no shortage of "great LSU players."

Then, again, given the talent-rich depth of the Tigers, it could be argued they don't lack for great players. Yet, only a select few stand out from the rest, and that's where Montgomery fits in.

Not only is he strong "between the ears," which is how he classified the proper mental disposition, he has the physical ability to become an NFL first-round draft choice. At 6-4, 245 pounds, he has the size to disrupt the opposition and the speed and footwork to create havoc.

What's more, he works diligently to enhance those physical skills.

Defensive coordinator John Chavis said Montgomery "brings some special things to our defense in terms of a guy who can play the run well and also rush the passer."

Montgomery's statistics support that claim. Last season, he registered a team-high nine sacks, the third-highest total in the Southeastern Conference. That matched the fourth best single-season total in school history.

His 13.5 tackles for losses ranked fourth in the SEC. He finished with 49 tackles overall, tops among LSU's returning linemen.

No wonder he was selected first-team All-America by the Football Writers of America, and was a Ted Hendricks Defensive End of the Year finalist.

Montgomery considered jumping early to the NFL, but decided against it because he wanted to earn his degree next spring. He also wanted to help his young backups prepare to start when he does leave.

Besides, in the meantime, he's enjoying himself and college. He redshirted his first year and then started the first five games of 2010 before his season was cut short by a knee injury. He had 18 tackles with two sacks, leading coaches to name him to the SEC All-Freshman Team.

Then came his dominant redshirt sophomore season. As much as he has accomplished, he has only 16 starts in his career, so an additional year of experience is likely to help him in the eyes of the NFL.

He'll team with Barkevious Mingo, LSU's other starting junior defensive end, to keep the Tigers among the nation's best defenses. They ranked second last season, limiting foes to just 261.5 yards and 11.3 points per game.

"We haven't lost a beat," Montgomery said. "The front looks good. We just need to step it up some. We'll work on that during the summer."

Namely, LSU has to be just a notch better than Alabama, which edged the Tigers in both defensive statistical categories and embarrassed them in the BCS national championship game, 21-0. LSU stopped Alabama in overtime during the regular season, 9-6, but was no match for the Crimson Tide in the postseason.

Montgomery said he and his teammates have moved on. "January 9th was put to bed a long time ago."

He did add a qualifier to that statement: "It's been in our minds. But just as a reminder that for every game you have to be ready for every last moment. ... As far as the bad taste in my mouth, I just look forward to the next time we play them."

That would be Nov. 3 in Tiger Stadium. There will be plenty of football to play before then, and LSU will need Montgomery performing as well as ever to handle the rigors of the SEC.

Montgomery has paid special attention to his hand work and his quickness off the line, saying he's committed to doing whatever necessary to finish his college career right.

That would entail finishing off the season one game better than last season ... which is where *Lindy's* ranks the Tigers heading into the fall.

— Dave Moormann

TOP DEFENSIVE ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Sam Montgomery**	Jr.	LSU
	Was a FWAA first-team All-American after posting nine sacks on great D.		
2.	**Brandon Jenkins**	Sr.	Florida State
	Has helped lead resurgence of FSU D with 36.5 career tackles for loss.		
3.	**William Gholston**	Jr.	Michigan State
	Reminiscent of former Spartan Julian Peterson ... freakishly athletic.		
4.	**Alex Okafor**	Sr.	Texas
	Big Oak was first-team All-Big 12 with 14 TFLs, including seven sacks.		
5.	**Joe Vellano**	Sr.	Maryland
	Great motor; moving to end in 3-4 look. Would rate even higher at DT.		
6.	**Barkevious Mingo**	Jr.	LSU
	Almost unfairly quick off the edge, had five QB hurries in SEC title game.		
7.	**Stansly Maponga**	Jr.	TCU
	Another great TCU pass rusher; nine sacks and five forced fumbles in '11.		
8.	**Jadeveon Clowney**	So.	South Carolina
	Nation's best recruit in 2011 playing like he wants to be top pick in 2014.		
9.	**James Gayle**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	Has potential to be as good a defender as there is in the ACC.		
10.	**Corey Lemonier**	Jr.	Auburn
	Tigers' defense starts with Lemonier (9.5 sacks, five forced fumbles).		
11.	**John Simon**	Sr.	Ohio State
	Has 28 career tackles for loss and leads Urban's talented D-line.		
12.	**Jackson Jeffcoat**	Jr.	Texas
	Rangy and sudden off the line, as his 21 TFLs last season suggest.		
13.	**Dion Jordan**	Sr.	Oregon
	Just like the rest of the Ducks: Built for speed and looking for a mismatch.		
14.	**Devin Taylor**	Sr.	South Carolina
	At 6-7, has a huge wingspan to get in QB's air space; six sacks last year.		

TOP DEFENSIVE TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Kawann Short**	Sr.	Purdue
	Has rare quickness, pass-rush skills for interior lineman (17 TFLs).		
2.	**Star Lotulelei**	Sr.	Utah
	Was voted by Pac-12 offensive linemen as the league's best DL last year.		
3.	**Jonathan Hankins**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Made 67 tackles last season and had a big spring for new coaches.		
4.	**John Jenkins**	Sr.	Georgia
	At 351 pounds, he is the classic immovable object on the D-line.		
5.	**Aaron Donald**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
	Moved around the front last year when he had 16 TFLs and 11 sacks.		
6.	**Jesse Williams**	Sr.	Alabama
	Won't be a big stats guy, but invaluable as Bama's new man in middle.		
7.	**Bennie Logan**	Jr.	LSU
	Made 57 tackles for the nation's second-best defense in 2011.		
8.	**Nikita Whitlock**	Jr.	Wake Forest
	Not the prototype: He's 5-11, 260, and just zips past interior linemen.		
9.	**Baker Steinkuhler**	Sr.	Nebraska
	Son of Nebraska legend has been good; senior season could be special.		
10.	**Jordan Hill**	Sr.	Penn State
	Coach Bill O'Brien says Hill is one of better DTs he's been around.		

LINEBACKERS

Rare talent has Irish looking for rare season

Notre Dame defensive coordinator Bob Diaco knows linebackers such as Manti Te'o only come around every so often.

Diaco says the only defensive player he has been around that compares to Te'o is Chris Long, the former Virginia star and current St. Louis Rams defensive end.

"He was unique," said Diaco, who coached linebackers and was special teams coordinator at Virginia from 2006 to 2008. "I hadn't been around someone like him before or since Manti. It's like every 10 years, 20 years."

MANTI TE'O

Photo by Robin Alam/Icon SMI

Te'o has been special — or as Diaco calls him, "rare" — since he arrived at Notre Dame as the nation's No. 1 defensive prospect out of high school.

The 6-2, 255-pound senior started 10 of 12 games as a freshman and recorded 63 tackles and 5.5 tackles for loss.

He followed up by more than doubling his tackles as a sophomore — 133, including 9.5 for loss, as he started every game.

Te'o continued to rack up impressive numbers as a junior, notching 128 stops with 13.5 for loss. And he added another element — sacks.

After recording only two sacks in his first two seasons, Te'o had five last year.

"I can improve on everything as a leader, as a football player," Te'o said. "I can just improve on everything and in every facet of my game."

There was no guarantee Te'o was going to give Notre Dame all four years of his eligibility. He contemplated entering the NFL Draft after the Irish finished 8-5 for a second straight season and lost 18-14 to Florida State in the Champs Sports Bowl.

He was projected as high as a first-round draft selection, but he didn't want to leave Notre Dame without his degree or feeling like he gave the university and football program everything he has.

"I'm just going to try to maximize everything I got, maximize my potential," Te'o said. "I'm going to make sure that when I leave here I can honestly say I gave it my all."

But while he gives it his all, Te'o understands that being one of the most high-profile players at Notre Dame can create some unwanted attention. He said he will block out bad thoughts as he plays his final college season.

"Honestly, it's a lot of pressure, and sometimes it's pressure you don't want," Te'o said. "Sometimes it carries over to your family, and people say stuff about your family.

"It hurts. You are just a regular 21-year-old, who has loving parents, and people are saying stuff about you and your family. It comes with the territory I guess.

"You always have to keep a clear mind and remember who you are and do what you do. And not pay attention to all the critics and guys who praise you. You have to stay focused, level-headed, and you will be fine."

Te'o returns to a defense that has plenty of talent, even after emerging star defensive end Aaron Lynch left the program during spring practice. Lynch said he wanted to return home to south Florida.

Notre Dame's defensive line features ends Stephon Tuitt and Kapron Lewis-Moore and nose guard Louis Nix III. Te'o will be joined in the linebacker rotation by Dan Fox, Carlo Calabrese, Ishaq Williams and Danny Spond.

In addition, safeties Jamoris Slaughter and Zeke Motta will keep the defensive backfield strong, as new cornerbacks Lo Wood, Josh Atkinson and Bennett Jackson settle in.

With a strong supporting cast, Te'o says he is thinking of only one thing in his final season — going out on top.

"I just want to win," Te'o said. "I want to do whatever it takes to win. I know I have guys around me, and this team wants to win. It's a special team. I'm not just saying that because it is my senior year."

— Tony Krausz

TOP INSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Manti Te'o**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Hasn't disappointed on or off field. Career: 324 tackles, 28.5 for loss.		
2.	**A.J. Klein**	Sr.	Iowa State
	Co-Big 12 Defensive POY; had 14 tackles in upset of Oklahoma State.		
3.	**Chris Borland**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	The best middle linebacker in Big Ten ... again (143 tackles, 19 for loss).		
4.	**Arthur Brown**	Sr.	Kansas State
	Ex-Miami Hurricane flew around for 101 stops in all-league season.		
5.	**C.J. Mosley**	Jr.	Alabama
	Former Freshman All-American will be a star in an expanded role.		
6.	**Kevin Reddick**	Sr.	North Carolina
	Vocal leader could be another first-round defender from Carolina.		
7.	**Alec Ogletree**	Jr.	Georgia
	Be hard-pressed to find a quicker ILB; 52 tackles in eight games in '11.		
8.	**Nico Johnson**	Sr.	Alabama
	Hasn't had the full playing time to post big numbers ... but he will.		
9.	**James Morris**	Jr.	Iowa
	Made 110 tackles last season while splitting time inside and outside.		
10.	**Shayne Skov**	Sr.	Stanford
	ACL rehab was coming along fine in the spring; tough, tenacious player.		

TOP OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Jarvis Jones**	Sr.	Georgia
	Big plays get noticed (13.5 sacks, 19.5 TFLs), but he's a complete package.		
2.	**Gerald Hodges**	Sr.	Penn State
	Former safety has great instincts moving forward and backward.		
3.	**Chase Thomas**	Sr.	Stanford
	Great size and pass-rushing ability off the edge (8.5 sacks last year).		
4.	**Khaseem Greene**	Sr.	Rutgers
	Big East co-Defensive Player of the Year after league-leading 141 stops.		
5.	**Jonathan Brown**	Jr.	Illinois
	Final seven games: 78 tackles, 13.5 for loss, four sacks, two recoveries.		
6.	**Mike Taylor**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	First-team All-Big Ten player who made 150 tackles last season.		
7.	**Jake Knott**	Sr.	Iowa State
	Returning All-Big 12 player is physical, tough; has 268 career tackles.		
8.	**Jelani Jenkins**	Jr.	Florida
	Fits the profile as athletic linebacker who should be making huge plays.		
9.	**Denicos Allen**	Jr.	Michigan State
	A playmaker (11 sacks, 18.5 TFLs) on excellent Michigan State defense.		
10.	**Sean Porter**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Porter (17 TFLs, 9.5 sacks) and DE Damontre Moore fit in fine in SEC.		
11.	**Kenny Tate**	Sr.	Maryland
	2010 All-ACC safety returning from ACL injury suffered in the 2011 season.		
12.	**A.J. Johnson**	So.	Tennessee
	Made 80 tackles en route to consensus Freshman All-America honors.		
13.	**Dion Bailey**	So.	USC
	Ready for bigger honors after being Pac-12 Defensive Freshman POY.		
14.	**Shaun Lewis**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	An impact player from the start, with 17.5 career tackles for loss.		

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE BACKS

Wolfpack craving a replay of Amerson's baker's dozen

The replay looped on the videoboard at Carter-Finley Stadium during North Carolina State's spring game.

There was Wolfpack cornerback David Amerson's 65-yard interception return in the Belk Bowl ... three times, three different angles, played over and over. Every time it was a touchdown.

It was Amerson's favorite interception of a conference-record 13 in 2011.

"That's a tough one to top," Amerson said of the big play against Louisville.

DAVID AMERSON

Photo by Jeff Siner/Charlotte Observer/MCT

"It was for the (ACC) record; it went for a touchdown, and it helped us win the game."

Amerson, who didn't have an interception as a freshman, had two in the 31-24 bowl victory. The pick-six in the third quarter became the deciding points in the game and eclipsed former North Carolina cornerback Dre Bly's conference mark of 11 interceptions from 1996.

Amerson added one more interception on Louisville's final possession of the game to give him 13 for the season. Al Worley of Washington is the only player in Division I-A history with more, 14 in 1968.

That kind of a season would be tough for anyone to top. What do you do for an encore after breaking a 73-year-old school record, setting a conference record, and leading the country in interceptions?

It's a question the junior from Greensboro, N.C., has already thought about in a whirlwind offseason of collecting All-American honors and the Jack Tatum Award as the nation's top defensive back.

First things first for Amerson: Stay humble. The bright-eyed, soft-spoken, under-recruited local product gets more attention on campus — and some good-natured trash talk from his teammates — but he's focused on following up his spectacular 2011 season.

"As quick as you go up, you can go down," Amerson said. "I have to have the same hungry attitude. I can't be satisfied with where I'm at."

Amerson attributes his success to his soft hands — he played receiver in high school — and a knack for the ball. If he can touch the ball, it's usually his. At 6-3, he's tall for a corner, but he still has quick feet and good hip turn, qualities the best cover corners have.

It's the combination of all the qualities — the athletic ability and the IQ — that makes Amerson so successful, NC State coach Tom O'Brien said.

"He has a great feel for the game and a great sense of anticipation," O'Brien said.

Plus, the coach added: "He just has a knack for making plays."

Amerson's attitude is even more impressive to O'Brien. After the season, Amerson's teammates voted him team MVP. When he stood up for the acceptance speech, he told his teammates that he would be defined by what he does with the rest of his career, not what he did in 2011.

"He has his mindset in the right direction," O'Brien said.

But will anyone throw in Amerson's direction this season? He had four games in 2011 with at least two interceptions, with game-deciding touchdown returns against Virginia and Louisville. Senior safety Earl Wolff said Louisville tested Amerson only twice in the bowl game ... and both passes ended up his hands.

"Any time the ball comes his way, he can make a play," Wolff said.

Given the design of the Wolfpack's defense — Amerson lines up as the field corner, always to the wide side of the field — O'Brien says Amerson will get tested, just not as much as last year.

Amerson worked on his strength and footwork in the offseason, but maybe he needed to work on his patience. He is prepared to see fewer passes and, likely, come up with fewer interceptions.

Thirteen, he admits, is a lot and there was some luck involved. But there's one stat he'll be counting on this season.

"As long as we get the wins, I'll be fine," he said.

In NC State's case, the wins usually follow the highlight-reel interceptions.

— Joe Giglio

TOP CORNERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Tyrann Mathieu** Plays bigger than he is, knows the right time to be aggressive.	Jr.	LSU
2.	**David Amerson** Can't expect him to grab 13 INTs again, but he'll always affect the game.	Jr.	NC State
3.	**Johnny Adams** All-Big Ten performer active and fast; three INTs and four sacks in 2011.	Sr.	Michigan State
4.	**Nigel Malone** Had seven picks last season in his first year out of junior college.	Sr.	Kansas State
5.	**Johnthan Banks** Has 12 career INTs; best Bulldogs DB in about a decade.	Sr.	Mississippi State
6.	**Nickell Robey** Small and quick (5-8, 165), he's All-Pac-12 vs. waves of tall, talented WRs.	Jr.	USC
7.	**Micah Hyde** Versatile DB stepped up in spring, asked to be leader and play more man.	Sr.	Iowa
8.	**Brodrick Brown** Makes up for lack of height (5-8) with athleticism and on-ball skills.	Jr.	Oklahoma State
9.	**E.J. Gaines** Defended 18 passes last season to set a single-season school mark.	Jr.	Missouri
10.	**Merrill Noel** Was a fearless freshman who broke up a school-record 19 passes.	So.	Wake Forest
11.	**Demontre Hurst** A veteran of 27 starts; had 55-yard INT return for TD vs. Texas in '11.	Sr.	Oklahoma
12.	**Xavier Rhodes** Numbers a bit down last year, but he's a big, physical player with upside.	Jr.	Florida State

TOP SAFETIES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**T.J. McDonald** Another Trojan who stayed; like dad, Tim, he's an All-American.	Sr.	USC
2.	**Eric Reid** By our count, one of six LSU juniors who could be first-rounders in 2013.	Jr.	LSU
3.	**Robert Lester** After nearly leaving for NFL, came back to lead reloaded secondary.	Sr.	Alabama
4.	**Bacarri Rambo** Downgraded a bit because he has to serve early season suspension.	Sr.	Georgia
5.	**John Boyett** Brings a linebacker mentality to the position; made 108 stops last year.	Sr.	Oregon
6.	**Tony Jefferson** Will be parked at FS this year after moving all over last season.	Jr.	Oklahoma
7.	**Kenny Vaccaro** Big hitter and game-changer, and yet another standout UT DB.	Sr.	Texas
8.	**Matt Elam** SS gets into the backfield (11 TFLs) and is also fine in man coverage.	Jr.	Florida
9.	**Lamarcus Joyner** At 5-8, covers a lot of ground from SS spot; second-team All-ACC in 2011.	Jr.	Florida State
10.	**Hakeem Smith** All-Big East safety already a veteran of 25 career starts.	Jr.	Louisville
11.	**Earl Wolff** Has forced seven fumbles and made 204 tackles in past two years.	Sr.	NC State
12.	**C.J. Barnett** Led the Buckeyes with 75 tackles last season.	Jr.	Ohio State

PLAYER RATINGS

ALL PURPOSE

Oregon's 'Black Mamba' goes for the jugular

The Black Mamba is the fastest and one of the deadliest land snakes in the world.

Named for the black coloration of its mouth, the Black Mamba uses a variety of quick strikes while attacking its prey. Each bite delivers a lethal injection of deadly venom.

TOP KICKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Caleb Sturgis**	Sr.	Florida
	Made 46 of 60 FGs for career with five coming from 50 yards or more.		
2.	**Dustin Hopkins**	Sr.	Florida State
	Man with the golden cleats was a Groza Award finalist last season.		
3.	**Quinn Sharp**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Best foot in the nation: Has been FWAA All-American as PK and P.		
4.	**Brett Maher**	Sr.	Nebraska
	Was 19 of 23 on FG attempts last season; only one miss from inside 50.		
5.	**Drew Alleman**	Sr.	LSU
	Made 16 of 18 FGs last season; knows what it's like to kick in the clutch.		
6.	**Zach Hocker**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Better than 80 percent in career (37 of 46 FGs) and great kickoff man.		
7.	**Michael Hunnicutt**	So.	Oklahoma
	Stability in the Sooners' kicking game: 21 of 24 FGs, long of 53.		
8.	**Andre Heidari**	So.	USC
	When Barkley and Co. aren't scoring TDs, he hits: 15 of 17, long of 50.		

TOP PUNTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Brad Wing**	So.	LSU
	2011 All-American kept Bama pinned all day in regular-season game.		
2.	**Ryan Allen**	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
	Won the Ray Guy Award (46.1-yard average, 22 inside the 20).		
3.	**Quinn Sharp**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Has posted a 45.8-yard average across three seasons.		
4.	**Jackson Rice**	Sr.	Oregon
	Ducks didn't punt enough for Rice to qualify nationally with 45.9-yard average.		
5.	**Tress Way**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	2011: Placed 34 of 63 punts inside the 20 with only six touchbacks.		
6.	**Brian Schmiedebusch**	Jr.	Bowling Green
	Ranked sixth nationally in punting; BG was fifth in net punting.		
7.	**Ian Campbell**	Sr.	UTEP
	Has two-year average of 45.6 yards after transferring from JC.		
8.	**Dylan Breeding**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Yet another reason (45.3-yard average) why Hogs put foes on their heels.		

TOP ALL PURPOSE

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**De'Anthony Thomas**	So.	Oregon
	With the right amount of touches, a Heisman isn't out of the question.		
2.	**Justin Gilbert**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	An excellent CB; on kick returns, it's one move, track speed, TD.		
3.	**Andre Debose**	Jr.	Florida
	Big-play WR has three kick-returns for touchdowns in 40 attempts.		
4.	**Jamal Miles**	Sr.	Arizona State
	Three return TDs in 2011; a threat on laterals and quick passes.		
5.	**Greg Reid**	Sr.	Florida State
	One of top corners in the ACC and has three career punt return TDs.		
6.	**Dennis Johnson**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Helped fill in for RB Knile Davis; was second in SEC in all-purpose yards.		
7.	**Dustin Harris**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Led nation in punt returns and is part of rotation at cornerback.		
8.	**Tyler Lockett**	So.	Kansas State
	WR had two kick return TDs; is son of former K-State star Kevin Lockett.		

De'ANTHONY THOMAS

Photo by Kirby Lee-US PRESSWIRE

Oregon sophomore De'Anthony Thomas is sort of the football equivalent. He's devastating to defenses in versatility and impact to the point that the 5-9, 173-pound running back/wide receiver/kick returner has carried the moniker "Black Mamba" since elementary school.

"It's been following me throughout my whole career," Thomas said. "I got it from my game on the field being compared to a snake."

As a freshman in 2011, Thomas slithered, darted and struck his way to 18 touchdowns while taking the term "versatility" to extremes.

Many running backs catch passes out of the backfield. Wide receivers get the occasional carry. Each position produces fine kick returners. But few college football players have ever been so effective from all three positions.

Thomas was the only player in the country last year to surpass 400 yards in rushing, receiving, and kickoff return yardage. And while the Ducks had a Heisman Trophy candidate at running back in LaMichael James, Thomas still ranked 11th nationally in all-purpose yards (159.6 per game).

Now, Thomas is better versed in the Ducks' no-huddle, spread-option offense and is in the process of adding bulk to his slight frame.

"I think his role will expand for us, and it's exciting because he's such a talented kid," Oregon coach Chip Kelly said. "You still kind of catch yourself going, 'Wow!'"

Many have expressed a similar reaction while watching Thomas perform since he first touched a football.

Thomas received the nickname "Black Mamba" at age 11 while playing football for rapper Snoop Dogg's "Snoop Youth Football League" in Los Angeles. While at Crenshaw High School, he ran the 100 meters in 10.57 seconds. He is typically the fastest player on the field ... so, he has only the end zone on his mind.

"I expect to score, but you never know how fast a guy is, so you always want to go as fast as you can no matter what," Thomas said.

Thomas originally committed to USC as a senior before changing his mind weeks before Signing Day, 2011. Essentially, Thomas turned down the chance to be the next Reggie Bush at USC to become the first De'Anthony Thomas at Oregon.

Playing behind running backs LaMichael James and Kenjon Barner allowed Thomas to learn, while Kelly and offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich schemed ways to take advantage of his skills.

Kelly held one-on-one meetings with Thomas during the season to accelerate the learning process.

The strategy produced mind-blowing numbers for a freshman:

- Rushing: 55 carries for 595 yards (10.8 average), seven touchdowns.
- Receiving: 46 receptions, 605 yards (13.2 average), nine touchdowns.
- Kickoff returns: 36 for 983 yards (27.3 average), two touchdowns.
- Punt returns: 3 for 52 yards (17.3 average).

That's 140 touches for 2,235 yards (a 16-yard average), with his 18 touchdowns.

So what's next for Thomas? Try more touches for potentially more yards and more touchdowns. He will back up Barner this season at running back, but he'll play plenty at receiver, and of course return kicks.

"He's got the whole package both at wide receiver and running back," Kelly said. Whether or not Thomas' body could handle a larger workload out of the backfield remains a concern, although he said he plans to add five to seven pounds of muscle by the fall while maintaining his speed. Oregon running backs coach Gary Campbell said it's difficult to gauge Thomas' ability to handle punishment at the collegiate level because defenders have rarely gotten a clean hit on him.

Getting to Thomas is easier said than done. Just ask Oregon cornerback Terrance Mitchell.

"He's a quick dude. ... He's like a cat," Mitchell said. "So you have to be like a cat just like him."

Maybe, but a cat is no match for a Black Mamba.

— Aaron Fentress

TOP 10 BACKFIELDS

1. ARKANSAS

Here's how this works: We could rank the best quarterback groups in the country, and we could separately rate the running back units, but we like to mash them together and mix it up. It's more fun to look at who has the best quarterbacks *and* running backs ... so any one-hit wonders in either department need not apply.

The backfield has to be the complete package. Which brings us to Arkansas.

The double-shot of quarterback Tyler Wilson and running back Knile Davis — both third nationally in our player position rankings — gives the Razorbacks two realistic All-Americans and two first-round draft picks for next season.

Wilson fired for 3,638 yards last season and is still coached by a Petrino (offensive coordinator Paul, not head coach Bobby), while interim coach John L. Smith will serve as caretaker of the offense and let Wilson flourish.

While Davis was sitting last season with an ankle injury, Dennis Johnson and Ronnie Wingo filled in nicely, and both are back. But the Hogs are eager to see the return of Davis, who ran for 1,322 yards in 2010 and can be a difference-maker in the SEC.

2. MICHIGAN

Quarterback Denard Robinson leaves plenty to be desired as a passer, but he's as slippery as any running back in the country and just as able to completely take over a game with his feet. The senior has 3,229 career rushing yards and 35 touchdowns on the ground, which makes backfield mate Fitzgerald Toussaint jealous. He didn't earn the featured role until a month or so into last season, but then he finished with 678 yards in the final five regular-season games. And the Wolverines have high hopes for sophomore power back Thomas Rawls, all while scheming cool ways to get Robinson and backup Devin Gardner on the field at the same time.

3. USC

The Trojans' best option is to have the nation's best quarterback throw to the nation's best pair of receivers, but there is nothing wrong with Matt Barkley handing off to senior Curtis McNeal, who emerged around the middle of last season to finish with 1,005 yards. What's iffy is the depth, with no experience behind Barkley and uncommonly little behind McNeal, especially after a spring knee injury to Tre Madden.

4. GEORGIA

The Dawgs' Aaron Murray has had back-to-back 3,000-yard passing seasons and led Georgia to the SEC title game last year. Isaiah Crowell wasn't disappointing as a touted freshman last season — other than the two disciplinary suspensions — as he ran for 850 yards. Needing depth, the Bulldogs added early enrollee freshman Keith Marshall, a national top 50 recruit whose quickness and instincts impressed coach Mark Richt in the spring.

Tyler Wilson

Photo by RD Moore

5. KANSAS STATE

Senior quarterback Collin Klein is built like a linebacker and runs like a tailback. Last season, he tied Ricky Williams' Big 12 record with 27 rushing touchdowns, while setting school QB records for rushing yards (1,141), carries (317) and points (162). Klein also passed for 1,918 yards. Junior running back John Hubert rushed for 970 yards. And the system works because of effective blocking from senior fullback Braden Wilson.

6. TCU

The Horned Frogs are the only team in the nation that had three running backs over 700 yards in 2011: junior Waymon James (875, six touchdowns), senior Ed Wesley (726, six TDs) and senior Matthew Tucker (702, 12 TDs). Wesley ran for 1,078 yards in 2010. Junior Casey Pachall, who broke Andy Dalton's records for completions, yards and completion percentage, rallied his team from behind four times in 2011.

7. CLEMSON

The Tigers have another year of experience in the up-tempo offense and the returning personnel to burn rubber in the opener against Auburn (some reconstruction along the offensive line, notwithstanding). Quarterback Tajh Boyd passed for 3,828 yards last season, and running back Andre Ellington (1,178 yards, 11 touchdowns) returned after considering the NFL.

8. OKLAHOMA

Senior Landry Jones is the Sooners' leader in every career passing category and is about to become the school's career leader in victories. Hard-pounding senior Dominique Whaley (105 yards per game and nine TDs before a broken ankle) and junior scatback Roy Finch (605 rushing yards and 34 catches) are a nice 1-2 punch. Sophomore quarterback Blake Bell, Jones' backup, rushed for 13 TDs, and junior fullback Trey Millard plays all over the field. Expect major contributions from running back transfer Damien Williams, who led junior college last season with 1,931 yards and 30 touchdowns.

9. NEBRASKA

Gritty Rex Burkhead has a nose for the goal line (17 total touchdowns last year) and twice had at least 35 carries in a game. Junior quarterback Taylor Martinez will continue to frustrate defenses with his ability to slash-and-dash in the ground attack. The question is whether or not he'll continue to frustrate those in scarlet and cream with his inaccuracy.

10. ALABAMA

This final spot could have gone to North Carolina, maybe Oregon, even Fresno State — hello, Wisconsin! — but the tie goes to the national champions. Cool customer AJ McCarron is easy to appreciate at quarterback, and Tide fans will cling to him ever more tightly after the late-April transfer of backup Phillip Sims. New faces in the backfield — Eddie Lacy, Jalston Fowler, Dee Hart and early enrollee freshman T.J. Yeldon — have varying styles and fresh legs.

TOP 10 RECEIVERS

1. USC

Robert Woods and Marqise Lee aren't just the best pair of receivers in the country this season, they could be the best pair of receivers in just about any season.

Here are just the raw numbers from last year: 184 catches for 2,435 yards and 26 touchdowns. And that was when Woods was a sophomore and Lee a true freshman. They just might be better now. Woods lines up everywhere in different formations, as USC is always probing the matchups. But not even Woods is as dangerous after the catch as Lee.

Who is behind these guys? Does it matter? Yes, transfers have thinned the backup spots, with one of the beneficiaries being sophomore George Farmer — giving USC a first-team trio of receivers who were all teammates at Gardena (Calif.) Serra High School.

2. CLEMSON

Sophomore Sammy Watkins was, like USC's Lee, a freshman sensation last season, overshadowing Tigers' junior DeAndre Hopkins. Hopkins got the message, giving up playing hoops for Clemson last winter and having a fabulous spring practice, able to add strength and weight and better battle for balls. Watkins won't get worse after catching 82 passes for 1,219 yards and 12 touchdowns, and look for Hopkins to improve on his 72-catch season.

OFFENSE

3. WEST VIRGINIA

Senior Tavon Austin led the nation with 2,574 all-purpose yards (198 per game), including a school-record 101 catches for 1,186 yards and eight touchdowns in the Big East. Junior Stedman Bailey is a top deep threat, averaging 17.8 yards per catch with seven 100-yard games in 2011 (school record 1,279 yards and 12 TDs). Junior Ivan McCartney chipped in 49 catches for 585 yards and three scores.

4. TENNESSEE

The Vols get better in a hurry with the return of rangy 6-4 Justin Hunter, known as "Gumby" for his ability to contort and stretch for any pass within his significant leaping ability and wingspan. Hunter, who missed most of last season because of a knee injury, rejoins Da'Rick Rogers (67 catches, 1,040 yards, nine touchdowns), while both welcome talented newcomers, including JC star Cordarrelle Patterson.

5. OKLAHOMA

Junior Kenny Stills (61 catches in each of his first two years) and Jaz Reynolds (715 yards, 17.4 per catch last year) are returning starters, though both had the drops last season. However, the Sooners' best two receivers might be newcomers: junior college transfer Courtney Gardner and freshman Trey Metoyer, who was the top high school wideout in the nation in 2010. He played at prep school in 2011 and was the Sooners' best wideout in the spring.

6. WASHINGTON STATE

This is probably the deepest spot for the Cougars, which is the right way to be when head coach Mike Leach walks through that door. These receivers will post numbers, none moreso than junior star Marquess Wilson, who could become Leach's Michael Crabtree of the Northwest, although the coach was on Wilson's case this spring for a lack of effort. There was nothing wrong with Wilson's effort last season: 82 catches for 1,388 yards and 12 touchdowns.

7. ARKANSAS

A pipeline to the NFL hasn't depleted Tyler Wilson's targets. Wideout Cobi Hamilton and tight end Chris Gragg moved up the receiving hierarchy this spring, ready to cash their tickets. Sophomore Marquel Wade previewed his shifty skills in the return game last season and now will be a playmaker in the passing game.

8. FLORIDA STATE

Explosive sophomore Rashad Greene, who had 597 receiving yards and seven touchdowns last year, is a star in the making. He averaged 15.7 yards per catch. Five of the Seminoles' top six receivers return for quarterback EJ Manuel.

9. GEORGIA

Coach Mark Richt dared in the spring to move dynamic wideout Malcolm Mitchell to defense in order to shore up depth at cornerback. Turns out, the 6-1 sophomore has skills there, too. Maybe the coaches will play tug-of-war with Mitchell, maybe they share him, but Richt won't want to be without his best deep threat for too long. Senior Tavarres King keeps coming on, making 47 catches for 705 yards last season.

10. TEXAS TECH

The Red Raiders retain their top three pass-catchers from last season, led by Eric Ward, who picked up some second-team All-Big 12 honors last season after catching 84 passes for 800 yards and 11 touchdowns.

TOP10 OFFENSIVE LINES

1. ALABAMA

At the end of spring ball, Alabama had NFL-DraftScout's top-rated senior center (Barrett Jones), its third-rated senior guard (Chance Warmack), its third-rated junior tackle (D.J. Fluker) and its No. 1 sophomore tackle (Cyrus Kouandjio). Not much of that is a stretch, with Kouandjio muscling into the starting lineup and moving Jones to his third position in three years.

2. LSU

The Tigers have four returning starters, with the nation's best pair of tackles — Alex Hurst and Chris Faulk. Senior guard Josh Dworaczyk, who has started 26 games, is back after missing last season because of a knee injury. LSU isn't waiting on him. The depth is such that sophomore La'el Collins came out of spring with the starting job. For now.

3. OKLAHOMA

The Sooners have four returning starters (junior left guard Gabe Ikard, senior center Ben Habern, senior right guard Tyler Evans, senior right tackle-to-left tackle Lane Johnson) and a fifth (sophomore right guard Adam Shead) who started half the season. This group helped OU average 4.5 yards per carry and allowed only 11 sacks last season.

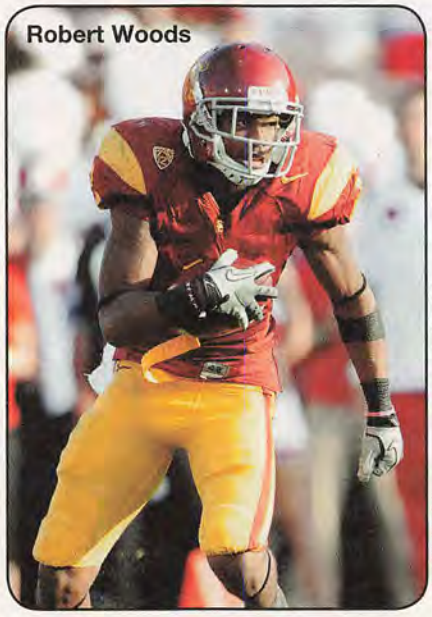

Robert Woods

Photo by John Pyle

4. TEXAS A&M

The Aggies might not be ready to hang with new SEC West pal LSU right away, but they don't have to concede much on the offensive line, especially at tackle. Luke Joeckel and Jake Matthews are junior three-year starters, having already graduated from what *Lindy's* described last season as "beasts in the making" to full-on monsters.

5. WISCONSIN

Despite routinely losing personnel to the NFL, the Badgers rarely get caught short-handed on the line. Ricky Wagner will keep the quarterback's blindside free from trouble, while Travis Frederick can dominate at guard or center. File this name away for the future: Dan Voltz, who impressed after enrolling in January as a freshman.

6. WEST VIRGINIA

Four full-time starters return, including senior center Joe Madsen, who has made 38 career starts and is one of the best in the country at his position. Left guard Josh Jenkins, who redshirted last season because of a knee injury, has 24 career starts.

7. NORTH CAROLINA

The Tar Heels bring back four starters, who still might be catching their breath from the fast-paced spring practices of new coach Larry Fedora. With left tackle James Hurst and left guard Jonathan Cooper having All-ACC talent, the smart money is on North Carolina getting in shape and being able to plow foes in the fourth quarter.

8. MICHIGAN STATE

The heart of the Spartans' offensive attack will be a thick front line led by guard Chris McDonald and tackle Fou Fonoti. Having one of the conference's most experienced lines will help ease the loss of all-conference pick Joel Foreman.

9. OKLAHOMA STATE

Three starters are gone to the NFL, but senior guard Lane Taylor (36 career starts) is a plow horse and senior guard Jonathan Rush (16 career starts) is back after a knee injury. Senior tackle Michael Bowie and Parker Graham each have five career starts. Even new center Evan Epstein is a senior.

10. TENNESSEE

This could be a reach. The Vols were a woeful running team last season, reflecting poorly on the line. This also could be a savvy projection, with five returning starters — not untalented, mind you — looking to make amends. If this pick doesn't work out, send your criticisms to Derek Dooley before UT pulls the plug on his university e-mail.

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE LINES

1. LSU

We'd like this group even better if it still had NFL early entry defensive tackle Michael Brockers, a first-round pick, but we're also pretty sure we can't rate the Tigers any higher than No. 1.

LSU had such depth last season — and still has so much of it — that end Barkevious Mingo started only four games ... and still had 15 tackles for loss, eight sacks and 11 quarterback hurries. Returning starting end Sam Montgomery had 13.5 tackles for loss, with nine sacks. Bennie Logan (57 tackles) is back at a tackle spot.

Our pals at NFLDraftScout.com projected in the spring that each of these juniors would be top 25 picks in the 2013 Draft. By that time, they should be wearing national championship rings.

2. FLORIDA STATE

FSU's defensive line is starting to look like many of the ones of yesteryear — the ones with Corey Simon, Derrick Alexander and Andre Wadsworth ... those kind of guys.

FSU didn't allow any of its final eight opponents last season to score more than 19 points, and let's credit a line that returns three starters. The Seminoles jumped to fourth last season in total defense — better than anybody outside of the SEC — and ranked second in rushing defense.

Senior end Brandon Jenkins, somehow not in the NFL yet after making 36.5 career tackles for loss, saw a dip in his stats last season, if only because of all the extra blocking attention. Junior end Bjoern Werner and senior defensive tackle Everett Dawkins will keep taking advantage.

3. SOUTH CAROLINA

The Gamecocks will put their defensive ends — 6-6 sophomore Jadeveon Clowney and 6-8 Devin Taylor — up against those in Baton Rouge and Tallahassee. Clowney, the nation's top recruit in 2011, had eight sacks and five forced fumbles last season while just running around and being an excitable freshman. He's smarter and stronger as a sophomore, when the coaches will also slide him inside, looking for mismatches. Senior Devin Taylor is an All-SEC-caliber pass rusher at the other end, while sophomore tackle Kelcy Quarles is coming off a Freshman All-American season.

4. GEORGIA

Nobody has nose guards like the Bulldogs, who have a talented pair of 350-pounders — give or take breakfast — in John Jenkins and Kwame Geathers. Coordinator Todd Grantham tinkered in the spring, using them in the same alignment, and not just at the goal line, an idea that has a chance to work because of Jenkins' athleticism. Let's just call this the biggest three-man front in America, including 309-pound end Abry Jones and 269-pound end Cornelius Washington, a speedy former outside linebacker.

5. TCU

Junior end Stansly Maponga is in the recent mold of TCU's undersized but super-quick pass rushers. He had nine sacks, 13.5 tackles for loss and five forced fumbles last season. Senior end Ross Forrest, a former walk-on, had six tackles for loss; sophomore defensive tackle David Johnson, a Freshman All-American in '11, had seven.

6. TEXAS

Senior Alex Okafor, a first-team All-American in 2011, needs to be in the discussion as the nation's best defensive end. On the other end, junior Jackson Jeffcoat was second-team All-Big 12. That duo combined for 15 sacks and 35 tackles for loss. At tackle, junior college transfer Brandon Moore could help immediately.

7. MICHIGAN STATE

No Jerel Worthy, no problem. William Gholston is one of the nation's best athletes on the edge, and fellow end Marcus Rush (yes, that's the last name we want for our defensive ends) drew national recognition for his freshman campaign. Their ability to get into the backfield (a combined 28 tackles for loss last season) will lessen the load on the interior line, where Anthony Rashad White had an impressive spring.

Tyrann Mathieu

Photo by Derick E. Hingle-US PRESSWIRE

8. OHIO STATE

All four starters return to a line that is looking to improve upon OSU's No. 50 national ranking in rushing defense. John Simon is one of the Big Ten's best and most reliable linemen; his 6-4, 317-pound teammate Johnathan Hankins might possess the most potential at the next level. They combined for 27 tackles for loss last season.

9. FLORIDA

Defensive end Ronald Powell's spring ACL tear was a blow, figuring to keep him out until at least October. Coach Will Muschamp still has dominant pieces to deploy in end Sharrif Floyd, who could move inside to tackle, and tackle Dominique Easley, who could slide outside to end. Such interesting options to have with guys who weigh around 300 pounds.

10. VIRGINIA TECH

The line returns intact for what has a chance to rank with the Hokies' finest defenses. Defensive end James Gayle leads the unit and should push for ACC Defensive Player of the Year honors.

TOP 10 LINEBACKERS

1. GEORGIA

Jarvis Jones, who began his career at Southern California, was an All-American in his first season at Georgia last year, fitting in perfectly into the Bulldogs' 3-4 scheme. He's the NFL prototype for an outside linebacker — one of those get-into-the-backfield guys who go high in the first round. Jones had 13.5 sacks and 19.5 tackles for loss last season.

All of his linebacker pals are back, including Alec Ogletree, a former safety whose speed is a wonderful asset on the inside, especially when he's free to roam because those 350-pound nose guards keep blockers off of him.

2. IOWA STATE

Arguably the two best linebackers in the Big 12 — and one of the most productive tandems in the nation — play in Ames. Senior A.J. Klein (116 tackles, 7.5 for loss) was the Big 12's Co-Defensive Player of the Year in 2011, and senior Jake Knott (115 tackles, four forced fumbles) was also a first-team All-Big 12 pick.

3. ALABAMA

Dont'a Hightower is gone, taken in the first round of the NFL Draft, and Courtney Upshaw went high in the second round. Coach Nick Saban will just blow his whistle, start the assembly line and crank out more for 2013. It's called "NFL ready" ... and the Tide will

have two more in senior Nico Johnson and junior C.J. Mosley, while Saban carves out space in the rotation for all his former five-star recruits.

4. STANFORD

Stanford has four starters back in its 3-4 scheme, plus Shayne Skov, who is making his way back from a knee injury suffered early last season. The Cardinal was third nationally against the run last season — so these linebackers are active and tough — and outside linebacker Chase Thomas led the league with 17.5 tackles for loss. Trent Murphy had 10 TFLs on the other side.

5. WISCONSIN

Bucky brings back two of the Big Ten's top five tacklers — Mike Taylor (10.7 per game) and Chris Borland (10.2). Both earned first-team nods and are experienced enough to help the team bring along a new face to start opposite Taylor on the outside.

6. OREGON

Michael Clay is coming off a 102-tackle season from the weak side, with returning starter Boseko Lokombo doing more of the dirty work on the strong side. Middle linebacker Kiko Alonso has a chance to be dominating — that's defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti's word — and will be looking to build off his Rose Bowl performance, when he was Defensive Player of the Game.

7. PENN STATE

Linebacker U remains. First-team All-Big 12 performer Gerald Hodges is among the best in the nation, while Michael Mauti is inching his way toward 100 percent after rehabbing a torn left ACL (at least now he has a matching set of surgically repaired knees).

8. MICHIGAN STATE

Chris Norman has made 23 starts and is a veteran complement to fellow outside 'backer Denicos Allen, whose 11 sacks last season are the most among returning Big Ten defenders. Max Bullough controls the middle of the field as well as any Big Ten linebacker.

9. FLORIDA

The Gators can always count on Jonathan Bostic, a heady middle linebacker who led the team with 94 tackles last season — 10 for loss. The man with big-time NFL upside is Jelani Jenkins, but he first needs to translate that athleticism into more game-changing plays for Florida.

10. USC

It's an all-sophomore starting crew, with Pac-12 Defensive Freshman of the Year Dion Bailey on one side and Hayes Pullard on the other — they shared the team lead in tackles. Middle linebacker Lamar Dawson, who supplanted now-departed veteran Chris Galippo halfway through last season, further settled into a comfort zone and leadership role in the spring.

Jarvis Jones

Photo by Joe Robbins

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. LSU

You can't not love the Honey Badger. In two years, Tyrann Mathieu has 15 tackles for loss, including six sacks, 14 pass break-ups, four interceptions, 11 forced fumbles, eight recoveries and two punt return touchdowns. That's a busy, busy Badger. And he might not be the Tiger's best pure cover man, even after Morris Claiborne left early for the NFL.

While Mathieu is 5-9, Tharold Simon is 6-3, and he broke up 10 passes last season in a rotational role. "He looked like he was 6-7 because he's all arms and legs," an opposing SEC coach told *Lindy's*. "He looked like a damn spider."

Throw in All-America candidate Eric Reid at free safety ... and the Tigers could have the nation's top defensive back for the third year in a row, following Patrick Peterson and Claiborne. Take your pick.

2. NC STATE

The Wolfpack has been a big-play outfit in the past couple of seasons, leading the nation last year with 27 interceptions — an amazing 13 coming from cornerback David Amerson. He and rest of the starting secondary return for more in 2012, having combined for 114 career starts.

3. USC

Free safety T.J. McDonald pulled a Barkley by staying for his senior season. Consider McDonald the quarterback of the defense, and a terrific spring portends an All-America season. Nickell Robey, a feisty 5-8, is one of the top cornerbacks in the Pac-12 and helps make this one of the deepest units in an otherwise thin lineup.

4. TEXAS

Junior Carrington Byndom was first-team All-Big 12 last season, and teams with impressive sophomore Quandre Diggs as a pair of formidable corners. Senior SS Kenny Vaccaro, another first-team All-Big 12 performer, has a relentless flair that gives a needed edge to the Longhorns' defense.

5. GEORGIA

The Bulldogs, who swiped an SEC-best 20 passes last season, will have to get by early in the season without returning All-America safety Bacarri Rambo, who was suspended. Other defensive backs also will have to sit out for a bit, but the Dawgs will be at full strength for the bulk of their schedule.

6. ALABAMA

The Tide will use movable parts — deep and talented movable parts — around safety Robert Lester, whose return for his senior season provides a high baseline for confidence. Look for cornerback Dee Milliner and safety Vinnie Sunseri to excel in expanded roles.

7. OKLAHOMA

Junior Tony Jefferson, one of the Big 12's best tacklers, takes his 21 career starts to free safety. Senior safety Javon Harris, victimized deep throughout 2011, moves down low. Senior Demontre Hurst is one of the Big 12's best cover men and a fierce hitter, while junior Aaron Colvin, who has played all over the secondary, is maybe the Sooners' top defensive playmaker.

8. FLORIDA STATE

The Seminoles intercepted 16 passes and ranked 25th nationally in passing efficiency defense last year. Cornerbacks Xavier Rhodes and Greg Reid, and safety Lamarcus Joyner — all veterans, are honors candidates so expect similarly good results for FSU.

9. OKLAHOMA STATE

The cornerbacks are playmakers. Senior Brodrick Brown was first-team All-Big 12 in 2011, and junior Justin Gilbert was second-team. Junior free safety Daytawion Lowe led the Cowboys with 97 tackles and three forced fumbles.

10. MICHIGAN STATE

Yet another defensive strength for Michigan State. Johnny Adams is an All-America candidate, and Darqueze Dennard isn't shabby at the opposite corner. Safety Isaiah Lewis returned two of his team-leading four interceptions last year for touchdowns.

Same Teams at the Top, Even After Expansion

Georgia coach Mark Richt entered last season with his job apparently in jeopardy. The hot seat was warmed by an 0-2 start. But then the Bulldogs reeled off 10 consecutive wins to capture the Eastern Division and play for the SEC championship.

Richt's status now seems secure, and even though offseason suspensions have damaged the Bulldogs' secondary, Georgia is the team to beat in the East, thanks to a prolific quarterback, solid skill position players and nine starters returning from the nation's fifth-ranked defense.

South Carolina, coming off a school-record 11-win season, will challenge Georgia for East supremacy. Florida, a mere 13-11 in the past two years, should have a great defense ... but a suspect offense keeps the Gators out of the East's winner's circle.

The West had teams ranked 1-2-3 in the AP poll late last season before Alabama defeated LSU to win the national title and Arkansas won the Cotton Bowl.

LSU figures to prevail again in the West thanks to a powerful running game and improved quarterback play. Alabama returns only four defensive starters — fewest in the SEC — from the nation's best defense.

Arkansas appeared ready to contend again in the West, but the ouster of play-calling genius Bobby Petrino could cause a setback.

Newcomers Missouri (East) and Texas A&M (West) likely will finish no better than fourth in their respective divisions.

EAST DIVISION

Georgia's Aaron Murray has had consecutive 3,000-yard passing seasons, and he has a talented receiving corps, led by Malcolm Mitchell, who caught 45 passes but spent most of his spring at cornerback. The run game should be solid. In the second year of defensive coordinator Todd Grantham's 3-4 scheme, Georgia allowed only 277.2 yards per game.

Steve Spurrier did a masterful job milking 11 wins out of a South Carolina team that changed quarterbacks at midseason and lost talented running back Marcus Lattimore in October. The mobile Connor Shaw picked up the slack as he ranked third in the SEC in pass efficiency. The defensive line is outstanding.

Florida will be stifling on defense, but new offensive coordinator Brent Pease (who replaced Charlie Weis) must coax production out of unproven quarterbacks Jeff Driskel and Jacoby Brissett.

Southeastern Conference Picks

SEC EAST	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Georgia	QB Aaron Murray had school-record 35 TD passes; 3-4 defense was terrific.	Early suspensions have secondary in a quandary; Dawgs lost three OL starters.	Dawgs project to win East again behind high-scoring offense, stout defense.
2. South Carolina	RB Marcus Lattimore returns; QB Connor Shaw proved solid; DL is outstanding.	Lost WR Alshon Jeffery, CB Stephon Gilmore to pros, DC Ellis Johnson to Southern Miss.	SC has beaten Georgia and Florida the past two years, but the defense will take a step back.
3. Florida	Ten starters return from a stout defense; team morale should be better.	Unproven head coach and QB; not blessed with skilled receivers or a power runner.	Gators will be better, but lack of offense keeps them from contending this year.
4. Missouri	QB James Franklin (3,846 total yards) is dynamic; spread-option is exciting.	RB Henry Josey (1,168 yards) might be out for season; defense will be tested.	Will be competitive, but Tigers find jump from Big 12 to SEC a bit shocking.
5. Tennessee	Offense should rank among three best in SEC; defense has assembled some talent.	Run game remains unproven; switch from 4-3 to 3-4 defense could take time.	After worst-ever 1-7 SEC record, Vols should rebound to win 7-8 games.
6. Vanderbilt	Solid QB-RB-WR combination; improved recruiting; new positive attitude.	Lost three best players on defense, and pass offense ranked eighth in the SEC.	Another bowl is possible but, despite improvement, team was only 2-6 in SEC play.
7. Kentucky	QB Max Smith, RB CoShik Williams provided spark; beat UT for first time since 1984.	Offense was last in SEC in most major categories; lost two best defenders.	Had five-year bowl streak snapped; another bowl appears unlikely due to poor offense.
SEC WEST			
1. LSU	Should be better passing team; very good run game; defense outstanding again.	Lost WR Rueben Randle, CB Mo Claiborne, DT Michael Brockers early to NFL.	If QB plays well, LSU has the ingredient it needs to win the national championship.
2. Alabama	Nick Saban has stockpiled talent at Alabama; QB AJ McCarron returns.	Lost three players early to NFL Draft; only four defensive starters return.	Tide could challenge for third national title in four years, but LSU stands in the way.
3. Arkansas	QB Tyler Wilson, RB Knile Davis great 1-2 punch; won 19 home games past three years.	Lost coach Bobby Petrino's play-calling ability; defense might not be title-worthy.	Even without Petrino, Hogs have enough ability to win 10 again ... but maybe not the West.
4. Texas A&M	Return 14 starters, nine on offense; new coach Kevin Sumlin has great offensive mind.	Blew five leads en route to 7-6 season; QB Ryan Tannehill graduated; defense shaky.	If Aggies don't fold in second half, they could win eight; will be challenged by SEC defenses.
5. Auburn	Return 8 defensive starters for new coordinator Brian VanGorder; good at RB.	Lost OC Gus Malzahn and 1,000-yard rusher Mike Dyer; QB play uncertain.	Could go 8-5 again, but not talented enough to compete with LSU, Alabama in West.
6. Miss. State	QB Tyler Russell had solid spring; five OL starters return along with three wideouts.	Lost outstanding RB in Vick Ballard; DT Fletcher Cox turned pro early.	If Russell has a good year, Bulldogs could challenge for Top 25 ranking.
7. Ole Miss	15 starters return, nine on offense; new coach Hugh Freeze brings fresh approach.	QB position a concern after Randall Mackey moved to WR; OL lost both tackles.	Rebels are 1-15 in SEC the past two years, and the outlook isn't much better this year. Patience.

Missouri brings a wide-open spread-option into the defensive-minded SEC.

WEST DIVISION

LSU's sensational season was marred by a 21-0 loss to Alabama in the BCS national championship game. But Zach Mettenberger, a former Georgia quarterback, should add spark to a pedestrian passing game, and the Tigers have a menacing defense.

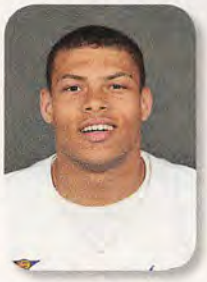
Alabama's second national title in three years was forged by a strong running game, efficient quarterback play and a tenacious defense. Despite losing Heisman Trophy finalist Trent Richardson, the offense should again be sound. But the defense was impacted by graduation and early NFL departures.

Arkansas is hoping to win its first conference title since 1989 (Southwest Conference) behind quarterback Tyler Wilson, tailback Knile Davis and an array of good receivers. But with Petrino gone, can the offense be as dynamic?

Texas A&M has a veteran squad, minus the quarterback, from a 7-6 team that tied for sixth in the Big 12.

— Jimmy Hyams

Most Valuable Player



Tyrann Mathieu
DB, LSU

Offensive Player of the Year

Tyler Wilson
QB, Arkansas

Defensive Player of the Year

Jarvis Jones
LB, Georgia

Newcomer of the Year

Dorial Green-Beckham
WR, Missouri

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Tyler Wilson	Arkansas
Strongest arm	Tyler Bray	Tennessee
Best scrambler	James Franklin	Missouri
Coolest in the clutch	AJ McCarron	Alabama
Toughest to bring down	Marcus Lattimore	South Carolina
Best hands	Ryan Swope	Texas A&M
Most dangerous deep threat	Justin Hunter	Tennessee
Best pass blocker	Luke Joeckel	Texas A&M
Best run blocker	Alex Hurst	LSU
Best cover corner	Johnthan Banks	Mississippi State
Best pass rusher	Jarvis Jones	Georgia
Special teams demon	Chris Johnson	Florida

Lindy's 2012 ALL-SEC Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Tyler Wilson	Sr.	Arkansas
RB	Marcus Lattimore	Jr.	South Carolina
RB	Knile Davis	Sr.	Arkansas
WR	Justin Hunter	Jr.	Tennessee
WR	Cobi Hamilton	Sr.	Arkansas
TE	Philip Lutzenkirchen	Sr.	Auburn
C	Barrett Jones	Sr.	Alabama
OL	Alvin Bailey	Jr.	Arkansas
OL	Alex Hurst	Sr.	LSU
OL	Luke Joeckel	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Chance Warmack	Sr.	Alabama
AP	Andre Debose	Jr.	Florida
K	Caleb Sturgis	Sr.	Florida

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Aaron Murray	Jr.	Georgia
RB	Eddie Lacy	Jr.	Alabama
RB	Zac Stacy	Sr.	Vanderbilt
WR	Da'Rick Rogers	Jr.	Tennessee
WR	Malcolm Mitchell	So.	Georgia
TE	Chris Gragg	Sr.	Arkansas
C	Travis Swanson	Jr.	Arkansas
OL	D.J. Fluker	Jr.	Alabama
OL	Ja'Wuan James	Jr.	Tennessee
OL	Larry Warford	Sr.	Kentucky
OL	Chris Faulk	Jr.	LSU
AP	Dennis Johnson	Sr.	Arkansas
K	Drew Alleman	Sr.	LSU

OFFENSE - THIRD TEAM

QB	Tyler Bray	Jr.	Tennessee
RB	Isaiah Crowell	So.	Georgia
RB	Christine Michael	Sr.	Texas A&M
WR	Tavarres King	Sr.	Georgia
WR	Ryan Swope	Sr.	Texas A&M
TE	Mychal Rivera	Sr.	Tennessee
C	T.J. Johnson	Sr.	South Carolina
OL	Jake Matthews	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Dallas Thomas	Sr.	Tennessee
OL	Chris Burnette	Jr.	Georgia
OL	Matt Patchan	Sr.	Florida
AP	Dustin Harris	Sr.	Texas A&M
K	Zach Hocker	Jr.	Arkansas

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Sam Montgomery	Jr.	LSU
DL	Jadeveon Clowney	So.	South Carolina
DL	Barkevious Mingo	Jr.	LSU
DL	John Jenkins	Sr.	Georgia
LB	Jarvis Jones	Jr.	Georgia
LB	C.J. Mosley	Jr.	Alabama
LB	Jelani Jenkins	Jr.	Florida
DB	Tyrann Mathieu	Jr.	LSU
DB	Eric Reid	Jr.	LSU
DB	Robert Lester	Sr.	Alabama
DB	Johnthan Banks	Sr.	Mississippi State
P	Brad Wing	So.	LSU

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Devin Taylor	Sr.	South Carolina
DL	Sharrif Floyd	Jr.	Florida
DL	Abry Jones	Sr.	Georgia
DL	Corey Lemonier	Jr.	Auburn
LB	A.J. Johnson	So.	Tennessee
LB	Alec Ogletree	Jr.	Georgia
LB	Sean Porter	Sr.	Texas A&M
DB	Bacarri Rambo	Sr.	Georgia
DB	E.J. Gaines	Jr.	Missouri
DB	D.J. Swearinger	Sr.	South Carolina
DB	Matt Elam	Jr.	Florida
P	Dylan Breeding	Sr.	Arkansas

DEFENSE - THIRD TEAM

DL	Damontre Moore	Jr.	Texas A&M
DL	Jesse Williams	Sr.	Alabama
DL	Bennie Logan	Jr.	LSU
DL	Brad Madison	Sr.	Missouri
LB	Nico Johnson	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Jonathan Stewart	Sr.	Texas A&M
LB	Alonzo Highsmith	Sr.	Arkansas
DB	Tharold Simon	Jr.	LSU
DB	Branden Smith	Sr.	Georgia
DB	Eric Bennett	Jr.	Arkansas
DB	Dee Milliner	Jr.	Alabama
P	Tyler Campbell	Jr.	Ole Miss

THE **BIG** ONES

Sept. 1	
Alabama vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)	Football powers meet for only the fourth time.
Sept. 8	
Florida at Texas A&M	Aggies' first-ever SEC game comes against former Texas D-coordinator.
Georgia at Missouri	Tigers make SEC debut vs. East champs in teams' second meeting ever.
Sept. 15	
Alabama at Arkansas	Hogs' aerial attack could challenge Tide's mighty defense.
Florida at Tennessee	Winner takes big step in right direction; loser continues to reel.
Sept. 22	
LSU at Auburn	This game has often determined which team contends in West.
Sept. 29	
Arkansas at Texas A&M	Former SWC rivals met the past three years in Arlington (Hogs 3-0).
Oct. 6	
LSU at Florida	LSU has won three of its past five games in The Swamp.
Georgia at South Carolina	Winner has upper hand in East race; Gamecocks have won past two.
Oct. 13	
Alabama at Missouri	Missouri leads series 2-1, last time teams met was 1978.
South Carolina at LSU	Steve Spurrier had his way vs. LSU in the '90s, but not lately.
Oct. 20	
Alabama at Tennessee	Tide has turned once-great rivalry into a rout, winning five straight.
South Carolina at Florida	Always intrigue when Spurrier faces his alma mater. He's won the past two.
LSU at Texas A&M	First regular-season contest in 17 years; Aggies won five in a row ('91-95).
Oct. 27	
Florida vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)	Gators are 18-4 since 1990 in SEC's only neutral-site game.
Nov. 3	
Alabama at LSU	SEC's two premier powers; Tigers are 9-4 vs. Tide since 2000.
Missouri at Florida	Tigers get a taste of what it's like in hostile SEC environment.
Nov. 10	
Texas A&M at Alabama	Bama is 3-1 vs. A&M; three former Tide coaches also led the Aggies.
Arkansas at South Carolina	If chips fall right, this could play role in who wins East & West.
Georgia at Auburn	Oldest rivalry in the South; Dawgs have won five of last six.
Nov. 24	
Auburn at Alabama	Iron Bowl features teams that have won past three national titles.
LSU at Arkansas	Border rivals play for The Boot; Hogs have won two in a row at home.
Missouri at Texas A&M	Former Big 12 members face each other for first time as SEC teams.
South Carolina at Clemson	Gamecocks have whipped instate rival three years in a row.
Florida at FSU	Gators have lost two in a row after beating Seminoles six straight years.

KENNY HILLIARD

Photo by Brad Schloss/Icon SMI

BOWL CONNECTIONS

SEC Champ
BCS (national title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Sugar)

SEC #2	Capital One vs. Big Ten
SEC #3-4	Outback vs. Big Ten
SEC #3-4	Cotton vs. Big 12
SEC #5-6	Chick-Fil-A vs. ACC
SEC #5-6	Gator Bowl vs. Big Ten
SEC #7-8	Music City vs. ACC
SEC #7-9	Liberty vs. Conference USA
SEC #7-9	BBVA Compass Bowl vs. Big East

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Tyler Wilson	QB	Arkansas	Sr.	Has size, arm, smarts, accuracy.
2. Marcus Lattimore	RB	South Carolina	Jr.	Combines balance, power, speed.
3. Jarvis Jones	LB	Georgia	Jr.	Great athlete, edge pass rusher.
4. Justin Hunter	WR	Tennessee	Jr.	Wonderful hands and leaping ability.
5. Knile Davis	RB	Arkansas	Jr.	Had 1,322 yards in 2010; great balance.
6. Barkevious Mingo	DE	LSU	Jr.	Big-time pass rusher; runs a 4.4 40.
7. John Jenkins	NT	Georgia	Sr.	350-pounder was unblockable in spring.
8. Devin Taylor	DE	South Carolina	Sr.	Outstanding pass rusher with great first step.
9. Eric Reid	DB	LSU	Jr.	Excellent ball skills, good instincts.
10. Jelani Jenkins	LB	Florida	Jr.	Runs well; has bulked up to 235.

1. ALABAMA: The Tide, which typically wins with defense, signed a group of defenders that rivals any in the country, headlined by linebackers Ryan Anderson, Denzel Devall, Tyler Hayes, Dillon Lee and Reggie Ragland. Another key defensive signee was five-star safety Landon Collins of Louisiana, whom Alabama swiped away from LSU. On offense, Alabama landed five-star running back and one-time Auburn commit T.J. Yeldon, along with receivers Chris Black and Amari Cooper.

2. FLORIDA: The Gators' group included the country's No. 1 offensive lineman, tackle D.J. Humphries of North Carolina, who should be able to contribute early. Florida grabbed another five-star prospect from North Carolina in strongside defensive end Jonathan Bullard. At weak-side defensive end, the Gators flipped longtime five-star Florida State commit Dante Fowler Jr.

3. AUBURN: The Tigers finished with a bang, getting two late additions to the offensive line — Rivals100 tackle Avery Young, who chose the Tigers over Georgia and Florida, and four-star guard Alex Kozan. All told, Auburn grabbed an impressive 13 four-star prospects. Among them were standout receivers Ricardo Louis and JaQuay Williams.

4. GEORGIA: This Bulldogs class was headlined by five-star talents John Theus, an offensive tackle from Florida, and Josh Harvey-Clemons, an outside linebacker. Georgia also made a killing at running back with the additions of four-star prospects Todd Gurley, a big, powerful player, and Keith Marshall, who has exceptional speed, from North Carolina.

5. TEXAS A&M: Kevin Sumlin's first class in College Station included five-star running back signee Trey Williams, who rushed for nearly 4,000 yards as a senior. Strong-armed quarterback Matt Davis was a four-star recruit. So was receiver Thomas Johnson, the country's No. 34 overall prospect. The Aggies also signed Rivals250 center Mike Matthews.

6. TENNESSEE: Rivals100 safety LaDarrell McNeil is the centerpiece of the class. However, one could argue Tennessee did its best work on offense, getting four-star quarterback Nathan Peterman, electric junior college receiver Cordarrelle Patterson and three other four-star receivers — Drae Bowles, Jason Croom and Alton Howard.

7. LSU: Cornerback Dwayne Thomas highlights a group with nine four-star recruits. On offense, the Tigers landed two massive tackles in Vadal Alexander and Derek Edinburgh, a pair of players that have excellent long-term potential. LSU also got standout receivers in Travin Dural and Avery Johnson, the younger brother of former Tigers star Patrick Peterson.

8. SOUTH CAROLINA: Steve Spurrier's Gamecocks hauled in a class of 25 that included running back Mike Davis, a player once committed to Florida. The South Carolina offense also added four-star prospects in receiver Shaq Roland, the top in-state recruit, and offense linemen Joe Harris and Brock Stadnik.

9. VANDERBILT: The 'Dores put together their best class in recent memory. All-purpose back Brian Kimbrow, the team's most well-known signee, is a speedy player who gives the Commodores a home run threat. Offensive lineman Andrew Jelks and defensive end Caleb Azubike also were major additions.

10. MISSISSIPPI STATE: The Bulldogs scored four four-star prospects — all on defense. Tackle Quay Evans and safety Will Redmond have difference-maker potential. Junior college end Denico Autry and inside linebacker Richie Brown also were important signees. Another player to watch is center Devon Desper.

11. MISSOURI: The Tigers landed the biggest prize in the country, top-ranked recruit Dorial Green-Beckham, a receiver, which helped the program score national attention on signing day. The offense also added quarterback Maty Mauk, four-star guard Evan Boehm (an Under Armour All-American) and tight end Sean Culkin.

12. ARKANSAS: The Razorbacks' class received a nice boost late with the flip of four-star linebacker Otha Peters from Tennessee. Offensively, running back Jonathan Williams, a Rivals250 prospect, was the top signee. On defense, Arkansas inked linemen Darius Philon and JaMichael Winston, high school teammates from Alabama.

13. OLE MISS: The first class for new coach Hugh Freeze included the Magnolia State's top prospect, Rivals100 defensive end Channing Ward. He'll be joined on the defensive line by tackle Isaac Gross. On offense, the Rebels picked up junior college signal caller Bo Wallace and talented tailbacks I'Tavius Mathers and Jaylen Walton.

14. KENTUCKY: Four-star quarterback Patrick Towles, the top prospect in Kentucky, landed in Lexington and he is someone around whom the Wildcats can build an offense. Some of Kentucky's top signees came on defense, where safety Zack Blaylock, whose father played in the NBA, was a significant addition.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Dorial Green-Beckham	6-6/220	WR	Springfield (Mo.) Hillcrest	Missouri
2.	D.J. Humphries	6-5/265	OT	Charlotte (N.C.) Mallard Creek	Florida
3.	Jonathan Bullard	6-4/255	DE	Shelby (N.C.) Crest	Florida
4.	T.J. Yeldon	6-2/205	RB	Daphne (Ala.) High	Alabama
5.	Trey Williams	5-8/175	RB	Spring (Texas) Dekaney	Texas A&M
6.	Landon Collins	5-11/199	S	Geismar (La.) Dutchtown	Alabama
7.	John Theus	6-6/292	OT	Jacksonville (Fla.) Bolles	Georgia
8.	Eddie Williams	6-4/202	ATH	Panama City (Fla.) Arnold	Alabama
9.	Dante Fowler Jr.	6-3/232	DE	St. Petersburg (Fla.) Lakewood	Florida
10.	Josh Harvey-Clemons	6-5/208	ATH	Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes	Georgia
11.	Thomas Johnson	6-0/180	WR	Dallas (Texas) Skyline	Texas A&M
12.	Todd Gurley	6-1/195	RB	Tarboro (N.C.) High	Georgia
13.	Reggie Ragland	6-4/245	LB	Madison (Ala.) Bob Jones	Alabama
14.	Amari Cooper	6-1/175	WR	Miami (Fla.) Northwestern	Alabama
15.	Keith Marshall	5-11/190	RB	Raleigh (N.C.) Millbrook	Georgia
16.	Channing Ward	6-4/250	DE	Aberdeen (Miss.) High	Ole Miss
17.	Kent Taylor	6-5/220	TE	Land O' Lakes (Fla.) High	Florida
18.	Jordan Jenkins	6-3/245	DE	Hamilton (Ga.) Harris County	Georgia
19.	Chris Black	5-11/170	WR	Jacksonville (Fla.) First Coast	Alabama
20.	Denico Autry	6-6/245	DE	Scooba (Miss.) East Mississippi C.C.	Mississippi State

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR: DORIAL GREEN-BECKHAM

Dorial Green-Beckham was the No. 1 recruit nationally for a reason. He's 6-6, 220 pounds and has exceptional speed. He's truly an elite player and will be a matchup nightmare in the SEC because of his combination of great size and overall athleticism. He'll play early, and he'll play well.

TOP SLEEPER: DARREON HERRING

A player to keep an eye on might be Vanderbilt's Darreon Herring. He's a long and lean outside linebacker who plays the game at a high speed and is highly intelligent. Herring was a bit light in high school, but he has an excellent frame. If he can bulk up, he has the ability to contribute this season.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER: DORIAL GREEN-BECKHAM, D.J. HUMPHRIES

Either Green-Beckham or Florida offensive tackle D.J. Humphries. The latter is a five-star talent and top player nationally at his position. Because Florida needs help at tackle, look for Humphries to play a significant amount in 2012, and it wouldn't be a shock if he slid into a starting role before season's end. Like Green-Beckham, he is a serious talent with a high ceiling.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP: DORIAL GREEN-BECKHAM

Easy pick. It has to be Missouri getting Green-Beckham. This is a player that had offers from every major program in the country and at one time it looked as if he might be Arkansas bound. But a late trip to Columbia, Mo., sealed the deal. Not only is he an outstanding player, but this gave the Tigers great PR heading into the SEC.

BIGGEST MISS: DORIAL GREEN-BECKHAM

Arkansas with Green-Beckham. The Razorbacks put a lot into that fight and nearly came out on top. The Arkansas class still has plenty of talent, but Green-Beckham's decision to go elsewhere stung. A close second would be Auburn losing out on five-star running back T.J. Yeldon, who flipped to archrival Alabama.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF: ALABAMA

The Tide once again finished with the country's No. 1 class (that's the fourth Rivals.com recruiting title in five years). Head coach Nick Saban obviously deserves a lot of the credit, but assistants such as Kirby Smart and Jeremy Pruitt played a major role with Alabama's recruiting success. Smart helped the Tide score big in Georgia; Pruitt was key in the signings of two five-star performers.

RANKING

1 LSU | TIGERS

SEC rank: 1 | Record: 13-1 | SEC: 8-0 (1st, West) | Stadium: Tiger Stadium (92,400)

Sam Montgomery

Photo by Rob Tringali/SportsChrome/Getty Images

"Our front seven is going to be very difficult to deal with."
— Coach Les Miles

TIGERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Les Miles — At LSU: 75-18, 7 years; overall: 103-39, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Studrawa
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Chavis

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1999
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Zach Mettenberger, RB Spencer Ware, WR Odell Beckham Jr., DE Sam Montgomery, LB Kevin Minter, CB Tyrann Mathieu, SS Eric Reid, P Brad Wing

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Speed, depth and athletic ability is found throughout the lineup. Mettenberger bolsters the quarterback spot and has a bevy of running backs to complement the passing game. The defense is stout from its hard-charging ends to its cornerbacks and at almost all points in between. Game-changing big plays are the order of the day.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The lack of an experienced, proven receiving corps is a concern. Mettenberger has untold potential but hasn't yet put it into action. For the most part, LSU avoided injuries last year, but several defenders have histories of ailments that could derail the Tigers' plans. Only one starting linebacker returns.

OFFENSE

New starting quarterback Zach Mettenberger gives the Tigers the strong-armed, pocket presence they've been lacking.

He and the skilled big-play performers surrounding him will generate most of the headlines, but it's what LSU has up front that makes everything go.

There are four returning starters on the line, including All-SEC first-team tackle Alex Hurst. Senior center P.J. Lonergan is a three-year starter. The Tigers also get back guard Josh Dworaczyk, who missed last season with a knee injury and is pushing for his starting job again.

If LSU lacks for anything, it's an experienced, proven wide receiver. Senior Russell Shepard's four touchdowns is the most of any returning receiver. Sophomore Odell Beckham Jr. returns as LSU's top pass catcher with 41 receptions for 475 yards and two touchdowns.

For all the advances in the passing game, a punishing ground attack has long been coach Les Miles' bread and butter. He has the workhorses to pull it off, too, with the top four rushers back from last season.

Junior Michael Ford tops the list with 127 carries for 756 yards and seven touchdowns. Junior Spencer Ware matched sophomore Kenny Hilliard in scoring eight touchdowns while having rushed 177 times for 707 yards.

DEFENSE

There is no shortage of defensive playmakers, from speedy ends Sam Montgomery and Barkevious Mingo to a secondary that features All-America junior cornerback Tyrann Mathieu.

In earning second-team All-America honors last season, Montgomery registered a team-high nine sacks among 49 stops. Montgomery has the quickness and strength to disrupt the opposition, while Mingo put his linebacker-type speed to good use last season in recording eight sacks.

If any spot may not be as well-stocked as the others, it's middle linebacker, where junior Kevin Minter is the only returning starter. He's a good one to have, though, given how he finished with 61 stops, including 21 solo tackles.

Mathieu tied junior free safety Eric Reid with a team-high 76 total tackles last season, while recovering five fumbles and forcing six. Mathieu also will return punts, helping his Heisman cause.

SPECIAL TEAMS

About the only thing sophomore punter Brad Wing did wrong last year was excessively celebrate what would have been a touchdown off a fake punt. Other than that, he averaged 44.4 yards on 59 punts en route to first-team All-America honors. He had 20 punts of more than 50 yards, and 14 attempts hit inside the 5-yard line.

Placekicker Drew Alleman was another first-year starter who excelled beyond expectations. He made 16 of 18 field-goal attempts and 62 of 63 PATs.

Shepard will return kickoffs.

OVERVIEW

Everything but the final outcome went extraordinarily well for the Tigers in 2011. That's why expectations are through the roof. Reaching them is never easy, but 13 returning starters and a home game against Alabama helps. The Tigers can score at a moment's notice and stop the opposition with a multitude of talented defenders.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Jeremy Hill: The 2010 *Parade* All-American might have played last year but never signed after off-field legal issues. Hill enrolled in January and rushed six times for 37 yards in the spring game. He joins a crowded position but has the capability of making room for himself.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	8	Zach Mettenberger	6-5	222	Jr.
RB	**11**	**Spencer Ware***	**5-11**	**223**	**Jr.**
FB	44	J.C. Copeland	6-1	280	Jr.
WR	**3**	**Odell Beckham***	**5-11**	**183**	**So.**
WR	80	Jarvis Landry	6-0	190	So.
TE	88	Chase Clement	6-5	251	Sr.
LT	**76**	**Chris Faulk***	**6-6**	**325**	**Jr.**
LG	70	La'el Collins	6-5	320	So.
C	**64**	**P.J. Lonergan***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
RG	**74**	**Josh Williford***	**6-7**	**324**	**Jr.**
RT	**72**	**Alex Hurst***	**6-6**	**340**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**99**	**Sam Montgomery***	**6-4**	**245**	**Jr.**
DT	77	Josh Downs	6-1	287	Sr.
DT	**93**	**Bennie Logan***	**6-3**	**287**	**Jr.**
DE	49	Barkevious Mingo	6-5	240	Jr.
LB	58	Tahj Jones	6-2	205	Jr.
LB	**46**	**Kevin Minter***	**6-2**	**242**	**Jr.**
LB	57	Lamin Barrow	6-2	229	Jr.
CB	**7**	**Tyrann Mathieu***	**5-9**	**175**	**Jr.**
CB	24	Tharold Simon	6-3	187	Jr.
SS	6	Craig Loston	6-2	208	Jr.
FS	**1**	**Eric Reid***	**6-2**	**208**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**30**	**Drew Alleman***	**5-11**	**183**	**Sr.**
P	**38**	**Brad Wing***	**6-3**	**184**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 8	WASHINGTON
Sept. 15	IDAHO
Sept. 22	at Auburn
Sept. 29	TOWSON
Oct. 6	at Florida
Oct. 13	SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 20	at Texas A&M
Nov. 3	ALABAMA
Nov. 10	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 17	OLE MISS
Nov. 24	at Arkansas

2011 RESULTS

W	OREGON	40-27
W	NORTHWESTERN STATE	49-3
W	at Mississippi State	19-6
W	at West Virginia	47-21
W	KENTUCKY	35-7
W	FLORIDA	41-11
W	at Tennessee	38-7
W	AUBURN	45-10
W	at Alabama (OT)	9-6
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	42-9
W	at Ole Miss	52-3
W	ARKANSAS	41-17
	SEC Championship	
W	vs. Georgia	42-10
	BCS National Championship Game	
L	vs. LSU	0-21

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.7	17
Rushing	202.6	22
Passing	152.5	106
Total	355.1	86
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	11.3	2
Rushing	90.1	5
Passing	171.4	8
Total	261.5	2
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 20	+ 1.43	2

RANKING

3 ALABAMA | CRIMSON TIDE

SEC rank: 2 Record: 12-1 SEC record: 7-1 (2nd, West) Stadium: Bryant-Denny Stadium (101,821)

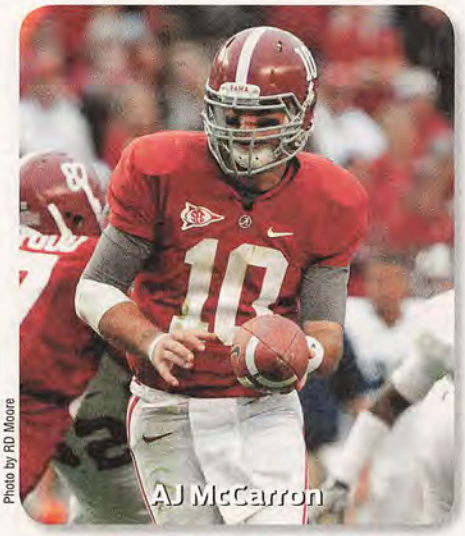


Photo by RD Moore

"There's still a lot that this team has to prove in terms of how hungry they are and how willing they are to make the sacrifices."

— Coach Nick Saban

CRIMSON TIDE at a GLANCE

COACH: Nick Saban — At Alabama: 55-12, 5 years
OVERALL: 146-54-1, 16 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Nussmeier
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kirby Smart

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2009
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2003
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB AJ McCarron, RB Eddie Lacy, C Barrett Jones, LG Chance Warmack, RT D.J. Fluker, NG Jesse Williams, LB C.J. Mosley, LB Nico Johnson, S Robert Lester, CB Dee Milliner

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Alabama's offensive line is one of the most experienced in the SEC, and AJ McCarron is a quarterback who makes few mistakes. The Tide's front three on defense should again free up the linebackers to make plays, as Williams and Damion Square bring plenty of size and experience to the table.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There's an endless array of talent on both sides, but experience is lacking at a number of positions simply because these players have had to wait their turn. Special teams play, particularly when it pertained to field goal accuracy, was one of Alabama's few weaknesses last season and could be again in 2012.

OFFENSE

New coordinator Doug Nussmeier, the former Washington coordinator who replaces Jim McElwain, has a freshly loaded stable of playmakers poised to replace everything that's gone from the 2011 offense.

The duties of starting junior quarterback AJ McCarron could broaden now that 2011 Heisman Trophy finalist Trent Richardson is gone. Coach Nick Saban has indicated that the Crimson Tide could look to air it out more in 2012, but any changes to the system will be minor.

Eddie Lacy, who missed the spring with turf toe, leads a talented stable of running backs that includes bruising junior Jalston Fowler and freshmen Dee Hart and T.J. Yeldon.

Promising, yet relatively inexperienced, faces dot the wide receiving corps, with players such as Kenny Bell, Christion Jones, Kevin Norwood, Chris Black and Amari Cooper. All came to Alabama as highly regarded prospects.

The line returns four starters who have combined to start 96 games. The lone new face is sophomore left tackle Cyrus Kouandjio. His presence prompted 2011 Outland Trophy winner Barrett Jones to switch to center, where Alabama had a vacancy.

DEFENSE

The best defense in the country last year will need to reload quickly.

Senior Jesse Williams is the key cog, as the nose guard in Alabama's defense has consistently plugged the middle and freed the team's linebackers to make plays.

Sophomore Adrian Hubbard appears to be the most promising player to replace NFL-bound Courtney Upshaw at the Jack linebacker position, but he also could flip to Sam.

Xzavier Dickson will likely fill in somewhere on the outside, while senior Nico Johnson, junior C.J. Mosley and sophomore Trey DePriest will try to replace Dont'a Hightower's quantifiable (166 tackles over the past two seasons) and intangible (two-time team captain) qualities.

Safety Robert Lester, who has 10 interceptions over the past two seasons, is the lone returning starter in the secondary. The Crimson Tide will fill the remaining three spots with a rotating cast of about six players. Cornerbacks John Fulton, Dee Milliner, Deion Belue and Travell Dixon all should see significant playing time.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Crimson Tide will look for better performances from kickers Jeremy Shelley and Cade Foster and punter Cody Mandell, who prompted their fair share of head-scratching moments in 2011.

Shelley and Foster combined to miss four field goals in Alabama's regular-season loss to LSU. Shelley redeemed himself by making five in the national championship victory. Mandell received one of the team's most improved player awards. Sophomore wide receiver Christion Jones could replace dynamo Marquis Maze on punt and kickoff returns.

OVERVIEW

No team has ever repeated as national champion during the BCS era, but the Crimson Tide's players and fans expect nothing less. That will be hard to do after losing so many key players from the 2011 team and entering 2012 with a target squarely on its back, but Alabama has enough talent to be locked in as one of the preseason favorites.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB T.J. Yeldon: The true freshman enrolled early; he ran for 88 yards and caught five passes for 91 yards and a touchdown in Alabama's spring game. Considered by Nick Saban as a running back who can "do it all."

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	**AJ McCarron***	6-4	210	Jr.
RB	42	Eddie Lacy	6-0	220	Jr.
WR	7	Kenny Bell	6-1	180	Jr.
WR	83	Kevin Norwood	6-2	193	Jr.
TE	84	Brian Vogler	6-7	258	So.
TE	89	**Michael Williams***	6-6	269	Sr.
LT	71	Cyrus Kouandjio	6-5	309	So.
LG	65	**Chance Warmack***	6-3	320	Sr.
C	75	**Barrett Jones***	6-5	302	Sr.
RG	61	**Anthony Steen***	6-3	303	Jr.
RT	76	**D.J. Fluker***	6-6	335	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	92	**Damion Square***	6-3	285	Sr.
NG	54	**Jesse Williams***	6-4	319	Sr.
DE	49	Ed Stinson	6-4	279	Jr.
LB	32	C.J. Mosley	6-2	234	Jr.
LB	35	**Nico Johnson***	6-3	245	Sr.
LB	47	Xzavier Dickson	6-3	262	So.
LB	42	Adrian Hubbard	6-6	248	So.
CB	28	Dee Milliner	6-1	196	Jr.
CB	10	Deion Belue	6-0	187	Jr.
SS	3	Vinnie Sunseri	6-0	217	So.
FS	37	**Robert Lester***	6-2	210	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	90	**Jeremy Shelley***	5-10	165	Sr.
P	29	**Cody Mandell***	6-4	202	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 8	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 15	at Arkansas
Sept. 22	FAU
Sept. 29	OLE MISS
Oct. 13	at Missouri
Oct. 20	at Tennessee
Oct. 27	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 3	at LSU
Nov. 10	TEXAS A&M
Nov. 17	WESTERN CAROLINA
Nov. 24	AUBURN

2011 RESULTS

W	KENT STATE	48-7
W	at Penn State	27-11
W	NORTH TEXAS	41-0
W	ARKANSAS	38-14
W	at Florida	38-10
W	VANDERBILT	34-0
W	at Mississippi	52-7
W	TENNESSEE	37-6
L	LSU (OT)	6-9
W	at Mississippi State	24-7
W	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	45-21
W	at Auburn	42-14
	BCS National Championship Game	
W	vs. LSU	21-0

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.9	20
Rushing	214.5	16
Passing	215.2	69
Total	429.6	31
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	8.2	1
Rushing	72.2	1
Passing	111.5	1
Total	183.6	1
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	23

RANKING

6 GEORGIA | BULLDOGS

SEC rank: 3 | Record: 10-4 | SEC: 7-1 (1st, East) | Stadium: Sanford Stadium (92,746)

Photo by Kim Klement-US PRESSWIRE

"Georgia to me is the most talented defense in the league, no question."
— Opposing SEC assistant coach

BULLDOGS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mark Richt — At Georgia and overall: 106-40, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bobo
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Grantham

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1996
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 9 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Aaron Murray, RB Isaiah Crowell, WR/CB Malcolm Mitchell, WR Tavarres King, LB Jarvis Jones, LB Alec Ogletree, S Bacarri Rambo

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense was among the best in the country and should be even better. Murray is a third-year starter with plenty of playmakers around him. There's finally depth in the backfield. Dawgs should have multiple defenders vying for All-America honors.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line has to be rebuilt, and there are more guards than tackles. A bruising fullback is a key blocker in Richt's offense, and Zander Ogletree is a bit undersized. The running game must be established to win the big games.

OFFENSE

Junior quarterback Aaron Murray, who established himself as a star last season, leads a passing attack that is the strength of the offense.

The Bulldogs have an abundance of receiving weapons, led by senior Tavarres King and sophomore Malcolm Mitchell. Sophomores Chris Conley and Michael Bennett made excellent progress last season. Senior Marlon Brown provides leadership and depth. Senior Rantavious Wooten has big-play ability but needs to become more reliable.

The absence of a power running game was Georgia's most noticeable weakness last season. Although running back Isaiah Crowell was the SEC Freshman of the Year, he was a non-factor in losses to LSU and Michigan State. Georgia had limited options other than Crowell.

Depth shouldn't be a problem this year. Keith Marshall, widely regarded as the top freshman running back in the country, enrolled early. Georgia also signed tough-nosed Todd Gurley, who was the No. 2 running back in North Carolina behind Marshall.

The Dawgs must rebuild the line without tackles Cordy Glenn and Justin Anderson, and center Ben Jones. The only certainty is David Andrews, who will take over at center. Kenarious Gates, who had been a guard, made an impression at left tackle.

DEFENSE

Statistically, Georgia's defense in coordinator Todd Grantham's second year was right behind Alabama and LSU. There's plenty of reason to believe the defense will be among the best in the nation again.

The Bulldogs return 20 of their top 22 players on the depth chart, losing two starters in cornerback Brandon Boykin and end Deangelo Tyson.

The 3-4 defense is predicated on an anchor in the middle at nose tackle, and the Dawgs return two good ones. John Jenkins could be the premier nose tackle in the SEC. He's not that far ahead of his backup Kwame Geathers, who might also see action at end just to get him on the field to spell Abry Jones and Garrison Smith.

The Dawgs are loaded at linebacker, led by Jarvis Jones, the SEC sack leader last year with 13.5. Jones might not even be Georgia's most gifted linebacker. Alec Ogletree is one of the fastest players in the country at inside linebacker.

All-American Bacarri Rambo and Shawn Williams are set at the safety positions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Georgia's placekicking duties might have been resolved when coach Mark Richt looked out his window and saw freshman Collin Barber booming punts. Barber, who averaged more than 43 yards per punt in high school, was offered a scholarship as a reward.

Highly recruited freshman Marshall Morgan is set to take over placekicking duties. Barber also kicked a 54-yard field goal in high school, so he provides some emergency depth.

OVERVIEW

The Dawgs have the talent, experience and an accommodating schedule to win the East again. Taking that next step and winning the SEC against a monster from the West is another matter. To do that, Georgia is going to have to find a way to win the power game on offense.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Keith Marshall: Even if Isaiah Crowell holds the starting job, this five-star recruit should make an impact because of his speed. Marshall enrolled early after rushing for 4,552 yards and 55 touchdowns in his North Carolina high school career.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	**Aaron Murray***	6-1	211	Jr.
RB	1	**Isaiah Crowell***	5-11	215	So.
FB	46	Zander Ogletree	5-10	224	So.
WR	12	**Tavarres King***	6-1	191	Sr.
WR	26	**Malcolm Mitchell***	6-1	184	So.
TE	88	Arthur Lynch	6-5	272	Jr.
LT	72	**Kenarious Gates***	6-5	328	Jr.
LG	75	Kolton Houston	6-5	291	So.
C	61	David Andrews	6-2	280	So.
RG	68	**Chris Burnette***	6-2	313	Jr.
RT	59	Nathan Theus	6-3	254	Fr.
DEFENSE					
DE	93	**Abry Jones***	6-3	309	Jr.
NT	6	**John Jenkins***	6-3	351	Sr.
DE	83	**Cornelius Washington***	6-4	269	Jr.
LB	33	Chase Vasser	6-3	227	Jr.
LB	9	**Alec Ogletree***	6-3	236	Jr.
LB	35	**Michael Gilliard***	6-2	220	Sr.
LB	29	**Jarvis Jones***	6-3	241	Jr.
CB	19	**Sanders Commings***	6-2	217	Sr.
CB	1	Branden Smith	5-11	176	Sr.
SS	36	**Shawn Williams***	6-1	220	Jr.
FS	18	**Bacarri Rambo***	6-0	218	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Marshall Morgan	6-3	185	Fr.
P	N/A	Collin Barber	6-2	191	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	BUFFALO
Sept. 8	at Missouri
Sept. 15	FAU
Sept. 22	VANDERBILT
Sept. 29	TENNESSEE
Oct. 6	at South Carolina
Oct. 20	at Kentucky
Oct. 27	vs. Florida (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3	OLE MISS
Nov. 10	at Auburn
Nov. 17	GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Nov. 24	GEORGIA TECH

2011 RESULTS

L	BOISE STATE	21-35
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	42-45
W	COASTAL CAROLINA	59-0
W	at Ole Miss	27-13
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	24-10
W	at Tennessee	20-12
W	at Vanderbilt	33-28
W	at Florida	24-20
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	63-16
W	AUBURN	45-7
W	KENTUCKY	19-10
W	at Georgia Tech	31-17
	SEC Championship Game	
L	vs. LSU	10-42
	Outback Bowl	
L	vs. Michigan State (3OT)	30-33

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.0	33
Rushing	164.0	49
Passing	244.5	48
Total	408.5	39

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.6	23
Rushing	101.2	11
Passing	176.0	10
Total	277.2	5

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+7	+0.50	26

RANKING

9 ARKANSAS | RAZORBACKS

SEC rank: 4 Record: 11-2 SEC record: 6-2 (3rd, West) Stadium: Reynolds Razorback Stadium (72,000)

Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

"You'd be hard-pressed to find a quarterback out there who's had a better spring ball than him. If he did, then he's Superman."
— Offensive coordinator Paul Petrino, on quarterback Tyler Wilson

RAZORBACKS at a GLANCE

COACH: John L. Smith — At Arkansas, 1st year;
OVERALL: 132-87, 18 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Petrino
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Haynes

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1989, Southwest
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2008
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 8 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tyler Wilson, RB Knile Davis, WR Cobi Hamilton, WR Marquel Wade, TE Chris Gragg, OG Alvin Bailey, DT Robert Thomas, LB Tenarius Wright

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Arkansas has a super skill set with Heisman Trophy candidates at quarterback and running back, great receivers and two on the offensive line who could threaten for All-America honors. The Razorbacks averaged nearly 37 points last season and should be primed for more in 2012.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: No getting around this: Arkansas lost one of the country's best offensive minds. There is no determining the affect of the fallout of Petrino's firing until the season gets under way. On the field, the Hogs are shaky at offensive tackle and suspect in the secondary.

OFFENSE

Arkansas lost an offensive genius when the university administration fired coach Bobby Petrino with cause because of his off-the-field conduct in April.

The Razorbacks still finished spring drills with an offense to be envied, and with a Petrino overseeing the potent attack. That would be offensive coordinator Paul Petrino, who knows his brother's system as his own and called plays for the last two years at Illinois.

Paul now answers to interim head coach John L. Smith, who was Arkansas' positively energetic special teams coordinator from 2009 through December 2011. He left to be the head coach at Weber State before being called back.

The coaching staff has the offensive personnel to rival the best anywhere, starting with Tyler Wilson, last year's first-team All-SEC quarterback.

Wilson completed 277 of 438 passes for 3,638 yards, with 24 touchdowns and five interceptions.

Running back Knile Davis, All-SEC in 2010, also is primed to be among the best in the country, assuming he stays on pace from his recovery from a broken ankle that wiped out his 2011 season.

Passing-game targets remain plentiful, including senior go-to receiver Cobi Hamilton, tight end Chris Gragg and wideout Marquel Wade, blessed with elusive qualities similar to graduated All-American punt returner/receiver Joe Adams.

Junior center Travis Swanson and junior guard Alvin Bailey have received SEC honors in the past.

DEFENSE

Starting inside linebacker Alonzo Highsmith was injured lifting weights the night before spring drills began. Tenarius Wright, a fifth-year senior, moved from defensive end to middle linebacker due to the injury.

Highsmith will find a home somewhere in the linebacking corps when he returns for fall camp.

Arkansas still has enough depth at end, with junior college transfer Austin Flynn joining Chris Smith, Trey Flowers and Colton Miles-Nash. At tackle, regulars Byran Jones and Robert Thomas return, with an ample assortment of backups. All are solid at least, with Thomas potentially spectacular.

Senior hybrid Ross Rasner is a leader while playing two positions, the Jack linebacker and strong safety.

The secondary lost safeties Tramain Thomas and Elton Ford, but Darius Winston and sophomore Tevin Mitchel have experience at the corners.

SPECIAL TEAMS

There is still a lot of talent in the return game. Running back Dennis Johnson is one to keep an eye on, as he has three kick-return touchdowns for his career. Wade returned a kick for a score last year.

The Hogs return senior punter Dylan Breeding and junior placekicker/kickoff man Zach Hocker. Breeding averaged 45.3 yards per punt last season. Hocker made 21 of 27 field-goal attempts.

OVERVIEW

The Razorbacks won't miss Bobby Petrino's baggage, but the Hogs are bound to miss his offensive mind and the tone-setting work ethic. Fan expectations of competing for a national championship still soar, even with Petrino fired. Defense was a strength at the Cotton Bowl, but that unit must improve for Arkansas to crack through the LSU/Alabama barrier.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Austin Flynn: The transfer from Los Angeles Harbor Junior College arrived in January, playing so well Arkansas felt at ease in moving starting end Tenarius Wright to middle linebacker. "He has the speed. He has the power," defensive ends coach Steve Caldwell said of Flynn.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	8	**Tyler Wilson***	6-3	220	Sr.
RB	7	**Knile Davis***	6-0	226	Jr.
WR	11	**Cobi Hamilton***	6-3	209	Sr.
WR	1	Marquel Wade	5-11	185	Fr.
WR	19	Javontee Herndon	6-1	204	Jr.
TE	80	**Chris Gragg***	6-3	236	Sr.
LT	69	David Hurd	6-6	300	Jr.
LG	76	Tyler Deacon	6-4	300	Sr.
C	64	**Travis Swanson***	6-5	305	Jr.
RG	67	**Alvin Bailey***	6-5	312	Jr.
RT	74	Brey Cook	6-7	308	Fr.
DEFENSE					
DE	86	Trey Flowers	6-4	243	So.
DT	54	**Byran Jones***	6-2	312	Jr.
DT	98	**Robert Thomas***	6-3	308	Jr.
DE	42	Chris Smith	6-3	251	Jr.
LB	35	Ross Rasner	6-0	212	Sr.
LB	43	**Tenarius Wright***	6-2	252	Sr.
LB	45	**Alonzo Highsmith***	6-1	233	Sr.
CB	21	**Darius Winston***	6-0	191	Sr.
CB	8	**Tevin Mitchel***	6-0	192	So.
SS	38	Jerry Mitchell	6-1	219	Jr.
FS	14	**Eric Bennett***	6-0	206	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	18	**Zach Hocker***	6-0	180	Jr.
P	14	**Dylan Breeding***	6-1	211	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 8	ULM
Sept. 15	ALABAMA
Sept. 22	RUTGERS
Sept. 29	at Texas A&M
Oct. 6	at Auburn
Oct. 13	KENTUCKY
Oct. 27	OLE MISS
Nov. 3	TULSA
Nov. 10	at South Carolina
Nov. 17	at Mississippi State
Nov. 24	LSU

2011 RESULTS

W	MISSOURI STATE	51-7
W	NEW MEXICO	52-3
W	TROY	38-28
L	at Alabama	14-38
W	TEXAS A&M	42-38
W	AUBURN	38-14
W	at Ole Miss	29-24
W	at Vanderbilt	31-28
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	44-28
W	TENNESSEE	49-7
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	44-17
L	at LSU	17-41
	Cotton Bowl	
W	vs. Kansas State	29-16

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.8	15
Rushing	137.4	81
Passing	300.7	13
Total	438.1	29

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.2	33
Rushing	167.6	74
Passing	195.2	25
Total	362.9	47

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

11 SOUTH CAROLINA | GAMECOCKS

SEC rank: 5 Record: 11-2 SEC record: 6-2 (2nd, East) Stadium: Williams-Brice Stadium (80,250)

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

Jadeveon Clowney

"I didn't know that much last season. I was tip-toeing out there and not really knowing what I was going to do."
— DE Jadeveon Clowney

GAMECOCKS at a GLANCE

COACH: Steve Spurrier — At South Carolina: 55-35, 7 years
OVERALL: 197-75-2, 22 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Spurrier
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lorenzo Ward

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1969, ACC
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 7 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Connor Shaw, RB Marcus Lattimore, WR Ace Sanders, DE Devin Taylor, DE Jadeveon Clowney, DT Kelcy Quarles, LB Shaq Wilson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive line was one of the nation's best last year and may not have much of a drop-off behind Clowney and Taylor, despite losing NFL talents Melvin Ingram and Travian Robertson. When healthy, Lattimore gives the Gamecocks a balanced offense and opens up the playbook for Spurrier.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Cornerback Stephon Gilmore's decision to leave early for the NFL left the secondary inexperienced. The offensive line lost three solid veterans, and while there are plenty of bodies, there's just one senior returning. If Lattimore doesn't come back 100 percent, it could put a lot of early pressure on the passing game.

OFFENSE

South Carolina was supposed to be all about its big three last year: Quarterback Stephen Garcia, running back Marcus Lattimore and receiver Alshon Jeffery.

However, the Gamecocks won 11 games and the Capital One Bowl with Garcia being dismissed halfway through the season, Lattimore going down with a knee injury a few weeks later and Jeffery posting nowhere near his projected numbers.

That all helped junior Connor Shaw emerge as the starting quarterback and undisputed leader of the offense. Lattimore, who has rushed for 2,015 career yards, expects to be back at full strength after having surgery to repair a torn ligament.

The biggest issue will be finding a replacement for Jeffery, who opened up the field for other receivers.

The Gamecocks will try to do it with a group of speedy receivers and solid tight ends who have had plenty of time to build chemistry with Shaw.

He'll hope to not have to rush out of the pocket as much as he did last year. The line lost three starters but has enough bodies to at least be as good as last year.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Lorenzo Ward worked under Ellis Johnson, who is now the head coach at Southern Mississippi, for four seasons.

He won't change much, except for more blitzing, using a group that is headlined by future NFL defensive ends Devin Taylor and Jadeveon Clowney; both are speed demons with strength and size.

Clowney will take on a bigger role, hoping to pick up where Melvin Ingram, a current NFL player who caused problems in the backfield, left off.

Shaq Wilson leads a linebacking corps made up of four seniors, while DeVonte Holloman hopes to play the linebacker/safety hybrid "Spur" role as well as Antonio Allen did a year ago.

The secondary must overcome the loss of Stephon Gilmore, a cornerback who left early for the NFL Draft, and will need a big season from Akeem Auguste, who played little last year because of a foot injury. D.J. Swearinger is the team's top safety.

Cornerback Victor Hampton and safety Brison Williams have plenty of talent but need to play more consistently if the secondary is to be dominant, as it was at times last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Joe Robinson, who is South Carolina's third special teams coordinator in as many seasons, has his work cut out for him. He has to decide between kickers Landon Ard and Adam Yates, and punters Patrick Fish and Mike Williamson. Robinson, one of the best in the business, will need to improve the team's return games and coverage.

OVERVIEW

South Carolina should be as good if not better than last year's team, which won a school-record 11 games. The defense has plenty of talent, and if the offense looks more like the 2010 version, the Gamecocks might just make it through a tough schedule and make their second trip to the SEC title game.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Shaq Roland: He's the fourth consecutive Mr. Football in the state of South Carolina to sign with the Gamecocks. The *Parade* All-American is expected to make an immediate impact with Alshon Jeffery gone to the NFL.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**14**	**Connor Shaw***	**6-1**	**207**	**Jr.**
TB	**21**	**Marcus Lattimore***	**6-0**	**218**	**Jr.**
WR	**9**	**Ace Sanders***	**5-8**	**175**	**Jr.**
WR	82	D.L. Moore	6-5	198	Sr.
WR	3	Damiere Byrd	5-9	168	So.
TE	**87**	**Justice Cunningham***	**6-4**	**264**	**Sr.**
LT	71	Brandon Shell	6-6	331	Fr.
LG	**50**	**A.J. Cann***	**6-4**	**309**	**So.**
C	**55**	**T.J. Johnson***	**6-6**	**319**	**Sr.**
RG	67	Ronald Patrick	6-2	305	Jr.
RT	**76**	**Mike Matulis***	**6-5**	**274**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**98**	**Devin Taylor***	**6-8**	**267**	**Sr.**
DT	70	Byron Jerideau	6-1	316	Sr.
DT	**99**	**Kelcy Quarles***	**6-4**	**286**	**So.**
DE	7	Jadeveon Clowney	6-6	256	So.
LB	**54**	**Shaq Wilson***	**5-11**	**224**	**Sr.**
LB	33	Damario Jeffery	6-4	233	Sr.
SPUR	**21**	**DeVonte Holloman***	**6-2**	**241**	**Sr.**
CB	3	Akeem Auguste	5-9	188	Sr.
CB	27	Victor Hampton	5-10	197	So.
SS	12	Brison Williams	5-11	205	So.
FS	**36**	**D.J. Swearinger***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	47	Landon Ard	5-9	189	Fr.
P	84	Mike Williamson	6-1	190	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Vanderbilt
Sept. 8	EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 15	UAB
Sept. 22	MISSOURI
Sept. 29	at Kentucky
Oct. 6	GEORGIA
Oct. 13	at LSU
Oct. 20	at Florida
Oct. 27	TENNESSEE
Nov. 10	ARKANSAS
Nov. 17	WOFFORD
Nov. 24	at Clemson

2011 RESULTS

W	EAST CAROLINA	56-37
W	at Georgia	45-42
W	NAVY	24-21
W	VANDERBILT	21-3
L	AUBURN	13-16
W	KENTUCKY	54-3
W	at Mississippi State	14-12
W	at Tennessee	14-3
L	at Arkansas	28-44
W	FLORIDA	17-12
W	THE CITADEL	41-20
W	CLEMSON	34-13
	Capital One Bowl	
W	vs. Nebraska	30-13

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.1	42
Rushing	192.1	25
Passing	181.5	95
Total	373.5	74
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.4	11
Rushing	136.0	45
Passing	131.7	2
Total	267.7	3
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.38	30

RANKING

20 FLORIDA | GATORS

SEC rank: 6 Record: 7-6 SEC record: 3-5 SEC (3rd, East) Stadium: Ben Hill Griffin Stadium (88,548)

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

"They've got to take control of our football team."
— Coach Will Muschamp, on his competing quarterbacks

GATORS at a GLANCE

COACH: Will Muschamp — At Florida: 7-6, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COODINATOR: Brent Pease
DEFENSIVE COODINATOR: Dan Quinn

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1990
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 6 offense, 10 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jacoby Brissett, QB Jeff Driskel, RB Mike Gillislee, WR Andre Debose, DT Sharrif Floyd, LB Jonathan Bostic, LB Jelani Jenkins, DB Matt Elam

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Gators are sound defensively, returning 10 starters (including injured defensive end Ronald Powell) from a unit that finished last season eighth in the country in total defense. The offensive line appears greatly improved.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Scoring. UF was horrid offensively last season and now must jell with a new starting quarterback and offensive coordinator. There is no proven commodity at any of the skill positions. The Gators could also have trouble rushing the passer while Powell is out.

OFFENSE

Quarterbacks Jacoby Brissett and Jeff Driskel were in a dead heat following spring practice to become the starter. Both true sophomores are big with a strong arm. Driskel is more mobile.

Finding the right quarterback will be priority No. 1 for coach Will Muschamp and new offensive coordinator Brent Pease. The former Boise State coordinator succeeds Charlie Weis, who left to take the head job at Kansas.

UF was atrocious offensively in Muschamp's first season, finishing 105th nationally in total offense.

Whichever quarterback wins the job likely will be an upgrade. Departed starter John Brantley threw for 20 touchdowns and 17 interceptions in his last two seasons.

UF will miss running backs Jeff Demps and Chris Rainey. Coaches are excited about senior Mike Gillislee, who enjoyed a strong offseason to lock down the starting job.

Florida's receiving corps is largely unproven. Andre Debose leads all returning wideouts with 16 catches last season. Jordan Reed is a reliable tight end.

The strength of the offense will be the line, which brings back four starters. Florida's five projected starters have logged a combined 69 career starts.

DEFENSE

Florida's defense could be among the best in the SEC, especially if junior defensive end/linebacker Ronald Powell can recover from a torn ACL suffered in the spring game. UF is hopeful Powell, who plays Florida's "Buck" position, will return by midseason.

End Sharrif Floyd looks poised for a dominant season, while the Gators also have talented returnees in tackle Dominique Easley and nose guard Omar Hunter.

All three starting linebackers return, led by Jonathan Bostic and Jelani Jenkins. Bostic led the team in tackles last season; Jenkins was third. Linebacker Lerentee McCray will likely be moved up to replace Powell in the lineup.

The secondary is loaded with young talent, led by dynamic strong safety Matt Elam. The junior led UF in tackles for loss last season with 11 and was its second-leading tackler. Elam also was first in interceptions (tied), pass break-ups and forced fumbles.

The cornerbacks don't have a proven star, but sophomore Marcus Roberson appears to be on his way. He started 10 games last season as a true freshman before suffering a season-ending neck injury.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Caleb Sturgis returns after making 22 of 26 field-goal attempts, with a long of 55 yards last season. The senior was a Lou Groza Award finalist.

Sophomore Kyle Christy punted a team-high 30 times for a 40.9-yard average last season.

UF also has a dangerous return game, led by Debose. The junior has returned three kickoffs for touchdowns on just 40 career tries.

OVERVIEW

The Gators should improve their win total after a subpar 7-6 campaign. Muschamp's second Florida team has much greater depth and should boast one of the SEC's best defenses, even if Powell misses a chunk of the season. Still, UF isn't ready to return to national prominence and likely won't have enough scoring capability to capture the SEC East.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Antonio Morrison: He's an instinctual and aggressive young linebacker with the physical ability to knock runners back. The 6-1, 216-pound true freshman enrolled early and recorded nine tackles in the spring game.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	Jacoby Brissett	6-3	229	So.
RB	23	Mike Gillislee	5-11	201	Sr.
FB	**8**	**Trey Burton***	**6-3**	**227**	**Jr.**
WR	4	Andre Debose	5-11	186	Jr.
WR	1	Quinton Dunbar	6-1	183	So.
TE	**11**	**Jordan Reed***	**6-3**	**239**	**Jr.**
LT	**73**	**Xavier Nixon***	**6-6**	**309**	**Sr.**
LG	66	James Wilson	6-4	327	Sr.
C	**72**	**Jonotthan Harrison***	**6-3**	**309**	**Jr.**
RG	**67**	**Jon Halapio***	**6-3**	**325**	**Jr.**
RT	**71**	**Matt Patchan***	**6-6**	**279**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**73**	**Sharrif Floyd***	**6-3**	**305**	**Jr.**
DT	**2**	**Dominique Easley***	**6-2**	**286**	**Jr.**
DT	99	Omar Hunter	6-1	314	Sr.
DE	**34**	**Lerentee McCray***	**6-2**	**247**	**Sr.**
LB	**3**	**Jelani Jenkins***	**6-0**	**233**	**Jr.**
LB	**1**	**Jonathan Bostic***	**6-1**	**243**	**Sr.**
LB	51	Michael Taylor	6-0	220	So.
CB	**5**	**Marcus Roberson***	**6-0**	**180**	**So.**
CB	**41**	**Cody Riggs***	**5-9**	**180**	**Jr.**
SS	**22**	**Matt Elam***	**6-1**	**201**	**Jr.**
FS	**9**	**Josh Evans***	**6-1**	**201**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**19**	**Caleb Sturgis***	**5-11**	**187**	**Sr.**
P	**44**	**Kyle Christy***	**6-3**	**200**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 8	at Texas A&M
Sept. 15	at Tennessee
Sept. 22	KENTUCKY
Oct. 6	LSU
Oct. 13	at Vanderbilt
Oct. 20	SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 27	vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3	MISSOURI
Nov. 10	LOUISIANA
Nov. 17	JACKSONVILLE STATE
Nov. 24	at Florida State

2011 RESULTS

W	FAU	41-3
W	UAB	39-0
W	TENNESSEE	33-23
W	at Kentucky	48-10
L	ALABAMA	10-38
L	at LSU	11-41
L	at Auburn	6-17
L	GEORGIA	20-24
W	VANDERBILT	26-21
L	at South Carolina	12-17
W	FURMAN	54-32
L	FLORIDA STATE	7-21
	Gator Bowl	
W	vs. Ohio State	24-17

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.5	71
Rushing	143.0	73
Passing	185.7	89
Total	328.7	105
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.3	20
Rushing	132.7	40
Passing	166.9	7
Total	299.5	8
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-12	-0.92	113

RANKING

29 TEXAS A&M | AGGIES

SEC rank: 7 Record: 7-6 Big 12 record: 4-5 (T-6th) Stadium: Kyle Field (82,600)

Photo by John Williamson

Damontre Moore

"Our mission this year is to finish the games that we let slip away last season."
— LT Luke Joeckel

AGGIES at a GLANCE

COACH: Kevin Sumlin — At Texas A&M: 1st year; **OVERALL:** 35-17, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kliff Kingsbury
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Snyder

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2008
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 8 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Ryan Swope, WR Uzoma Nwachukwu, RB Christine Michael, OL Luke Joeckel, OL Jake Matthews, DE Damontre Moore, LB Sean Porter, LB Jonathan Stewart

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: As long as the Aggies avoid any major injuries up front, the offensive line, led by bookend tackles Joeckel and Matthews and senior center Patrick Lewis, should provide plenty of holes for a strong running game and adequate time for a new starting quarterback. Defensively, Porter and Moore could be true difference-makers.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: A&M enters its first year in the SEC with a relatively thin defensive front and some significant holes to fill in the secondary. The Aggies also have an inexperienced quarterback and cannot afford many injuries anywhere, as there isn't much proven depth, even in areas that are team strengths, such as the offensive line.

OFFENSE

Moving the football and lighting up the scoreboard were rarely problems last year, as the Aggies broke school records for passing, total and scoring offense.

And that was before the arrival of head coach Kevin Sumlin and offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury, who called the shots last year at Houston, which led the nation in total offense.

Even with the loss of NFL draft picks Ryan Tannehill and Cyrus Gray, A&M has plenty of weapons, beginning with what could be one of the most talented offensive lines in A&M history.

With All-America candidate Luke Joeckel at left tackle and Jake Matthews at right tackle, the Aggies should be able to protect strong-armed quarterback Jameill Showers. He isn't particularly big, but he's comparable to Houston's record-setting Case Keenum.

The Aggies feature proven playmakers in senior receivers Ryan Swope and Uzoma Nwachukwu. With the healthy return of outstanding senior running back Christine Michael, the addition of a couple of talented newcomers in the backfield and the overall strength of the offensive front, Kingsbury's first A&M offense could be far more balanced than outsiders might expect.

DEFENSE

Sumlin's biggest area of concern is the defensive front.

Junior end Damontre Moore is a talented pass rusher who, along with big-hitting outside linebacker Sean Porter, played a major role in helping the Aggies lead the Big 12 last year with 51 sacks. Senior outside linebacker Steven Jenkins also has a chance to be an impact player.

There are more questions than answers throughout the rest of the unit. Senior end Spencer Nealy plays exceptionally hard, and senior tackle Jonathan Mathis could be a force on the interior if he returns fully from a knee injury that sidelined him much of last season.

Depth is also a concern in the secondary, especially at the safety positions.

Senior free safety Steven Campbell is a big, physical presence with NFL skills, but his collegiate career has been marked by more injuries than impact plays. A&M is young but talented at cornerback, where youngsters Deshazor Everett and Floyd Raven have stepped up in a big way.

SPECIAL TEAMS

A&M will miss Lou Groza Award winner Randy Bullock, but the Aggies have high hopes for redshirt freshman Taylor Bertolet. Punter Ryan Epperson returns for his senior season after averaging 41.2 yards per kick, but he could be seriously pushed by sophomore Drew Kaser.

A&M has plenty of outstanding return options, led by Dustin Harris, who averaged 18.6 yards per punt return last year to lead the nation.

OVERVIEW

Texas A&M has a handful of personnel concerns, and the first-year SEC schedule features every national title winner since 2006, so it's difficult to imagine the Aggies would be consistent enough to be one of the top contenders in the SEC West. But this team certainly possesses enough offensive firepower to win seven or eight games and be highly competitive with any team.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Trey Williams: The true freshman isn't big (5-8, 175), but he has a tremendous burst and game-changing acceleration. He finished his high school career in Texas with 8,110 rushing yards and 86 touchdowns.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	Jameill Showers	6-2	219	So.
RB	**33**	**Christine Michael***	**5-11**	**213**	**Sr.**
WR	**25**	**Ryan Swope***	**6-0**	**206**	**Sr.**
WR	**7**	**Uzoma Nwachukwu***	**6-0**	**194**	**Sr.**
WR	82	Mike Evans	6-5	209	Fr.
WR	5	Kenric McNeal	6-1	184	Sr.
LT	**76**	**Luke Joeckel***	**6-6**	**310**	**Jr.**
LG	**51**	**Jarvis Harrison***	**6-4**	**317**	**So.**
C	**61**	**Patrick Lewis***	**6-2**	**306**	**Sr.**
RG	**70**	**Cedric Ogbuehi***	**6-5**	**292**	**So.**
RT	**75**	**Jake Matthews***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**94**	**Damontre Moore***	**6-4**	**245**	**Jr.**
DT	42	Kirby Ennis	6-4	286	Jr.
DT	92	Jonathan Mathis	6-2	293	Sr.
DE	**99**	**Spencer Nealy***	**6-5**	**277**	**Sr.**
LB	**10**	**Sean Porter***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**11**	**Jonathan Stewart***	**6-4**	**237**	**Sr.**
LB	**45**	**Steven Jenkins***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
CB	29	Deshazor Everett	6-0	176	So.
CB	14	Floyd Raven	6-2	187	So.
SS	31	Howard Matthews	6-2	206	So.
FS	2	Steven Campbell	6-0	201	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	91	Taylor Bertolet	5-9	165	Fr.
P	**48**	**Ryan Epperson***	**6-2**	**191**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 8	FLORIDA
Sept. 15	at SMU
Sept. 22	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 29	ARKANSAS
Oct. 6	at Ole Miss
Oct. 20	LSU
Oct. 27	at Auburn
Nov. 3	at Mississippi State
Nov. 10	at Alabama
Nov. 17	SAM HOUSTON STATE
Nov. 24	MISSOURI

2011 RESULTS

W	SMU	46-14
W	Idaho	37-7
L	Oklahoma State	29-30
L	at Arkansas	38-42
W	at Texas Tech	45-40
W	Baylor	55-28
W	at Iowa State	33-17
L	Missouri (OT)	31-38
L	at Oklahoma	25-41
L	at Kansas State (4OT)	50-53
W	Kansas	61-7
L	Texas	25-27
	Meineke Car Care Bowl	
W	vs. Northwestern	32-22

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	39.1	11
Rushing	199.2	24
Passing	291.1	18
Total	490.2	7

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.2	70
Rushing	101.9	12
Passing	276.3	109
Total	378.2	59

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-9	-0.69	106

RANKING

30 MISSOURI | TIGERS

SEC rank: 8 Record: 8-5 Big 12 record: 5-4 (5th) Stadium: Memorial Stadium/Faurot Field (68,349)

Photo by John Williamson

Kendial Lawrence

"We all recognize that conference is considered a real physical league. But we're still going to run our offense."
— Coach Gary Pinkel on the SEC

TIGERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Gary Pinkel — At Missouri: 85-54, 11 years
OVERALL: 158-91-3, 21 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Yost
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Steckel

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1969, Big 8 co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 5 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB James Franklin, WR T.J. Moe, WR Marcus Lucas, WR Dorial Green-Beckham, LT Elvis Fisher, DT Sheldon Richardson, LB Andrew Wilson, CB E.J. Gaines

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Assuming his shoulder is healthy, Franklin gives the Tigers a dual-threat force in the backfield, with loads of weapons at tailback and receiver. The O-line loses three starters but brings back four players with starting experience. The linebacker corps might be MU's best under Pinkel, and Gaines was a shutdown corner in the pass-prolific Big 12.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Without injured tailback Henry Josey, can the running game still thrive against the rugged SEC defenses? The D-line is short on depth and experience at the interior positions. If Franklin needs more time for his shoulder to heal, can redshirt freshman QB Corbin Berkstresser handle the job?

OFFENSE

Under four different quarterbacks, Missouri's recent offenses have been among the Big 12's most prolific, including last fall when first-year starter James Franklin became a potent dual-threat weapon.

Missouri's new league is celebrated for its punishing defenses, but the Tigers don't expect to change their stripes when it comes to slinging the ball out of four- and five-wide formations.

Last year, Franklin and Henry Josey emerged as the Big 12's most prolific quarterback-running back tandem, but Josey most likely will miss the season after suffering a catastrophic knee injury last fall. Franklin was on the sidelines this spring after tearing the labrum in his throwing shoulder but is expected to return in time for the season.

Slot receiver T.J. Moe has led the team in receptions each of the past two seasons. He'll be flanked by deep threats Marcus Lucas and L'Damian Washington on the outside, while heralded freshman Dorial Green-Beckham figures to factor in the receiver mix, too.

Missouri loses two starting linemen but returns fourth-year starting left tackle Elvis Fisher, who was granted a sixth year of eligibility after missing last season with a torn patellar tendon.

DEFENSE

In the Big 12, Missouri usually played its best defense when it got a rare break from the waves of no-huddle spread offenses. That bodes well for the Tigers in the SEC, where offenses averaged fewer plays, yards and points than teams in the Big 12 last season.

Senior middle linebacker Will Ebner was granted a fifth year of eligibility after suffering a season-ending ankle injury in last year's opener. He joins a loaded corps that includes Zaviar Gooden and Andrew Wilson.

Depth should be a concern along the defensive line, where the Tigers are especially short on experienced defensive tackles. Sheldon Richardson, the former ballyhooed junior college transfer, is the most seasoned of the bunch but missed spring practice recovering from shoulder surgery.

Defensive end is again one of MU's deepest positions, with former All-Big 12 pass-rusher Brad Madison back on one side. First-team All-Big 12 cornerback E.J. Gaines leads the secondary after setting a single-season school record with 18 passes defended last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Trey Barrow stepped in at midseason last year and took over kicking duties when Grant Ressel's struggles were compounded by a hip injury. After making 7 of 9 field-goal attempts in his relief role, Barrow struggled with accuracy this spring. He'll be pushed by walk-ons Andrew Baggett and Nick Coffman.

Barrow earned second-team All-Big 12 honors as a punter.

OVERVIEW

The Tigers have enough playmakers on both sides to compete immediately in the SEC East, but much will ride on Franklin's ability to stay healthy and produce as a runner and passer. Missouri was fortunate to land in the lighter (for the moment) Eastern division. Although the Tigers are a step behind the SEC's best, they should be competitive while adjusting to new surroundings.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Dorial Green-Beckham: He was widely ranked as the No. 1 player in the 2012 recruiting class. Green-Beckham, expected to play right away, set national prep records for receiving yards (6,353) and TD catches (75) at Hillcrest High School in Springfield, Mo.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**1**	**James Franklin***	**6-2**	**225**	**Jr.**
RB	4	Kendial Lawrence	5-9	195	Sr.
WR	**28**	**T.J. Moe***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
WR	85	Marcus Lucas	6-5	215	Jr.
WR	2	L'Damian Washington	6-4	195	Jr.
TE	81	Eric Waters	6-4	240	Jr.
LT	72	Elvis Fisher	6-5	295	Sr.
LG	**53**	**Travis Ruth***	**6-2**	**295**	**Sr.**
C	65	Mitch Morse	6-5	295	So.
RG	**75**	**Jack Meiners***	**6-6**	**310**	**Sr.**
RT	**68**	**Justin Britt***	**6-6**	**300**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**57**	**Brad Madison***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
DT	34	Sheldon Richardson	6-4	295	Sr.
NT	96	Lucas Vincent	6-2	295	So.
DE	52	Michael Sam	6-3	260	Jr.
LB	**25**	**Zaviar Gooden***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	32	Will Ebner	6-0	230	Sr.
LB	**48**	**Andrew Wilson***	**6-3**	**235**	**Jr.**
CB	**31**	**E.J. Gaines***	**5-10**	**190**	**Jr.**
CB	**1**	**Kip Edwards***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
SS	30	Kenronte Walker	6-0	210	Sr.
FS	9	Braylon Webb	6-2	210	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**97**	**Trey Barrow***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
P	**97**	**Trey Barrow***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	S.E. LOUISIANA
Sept. 8	GEORGIA
Sept. 15	ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 22	at South Carolina
Sept. 29	at UCF
Oct. 6	VANDERBILT
Oct. 13	ALABAMA
Oct. 27	KENTUCKY
Nov. 3	at Florida
Nov. 10	at Tennessee
Nov. 17	SYRACUSE
Nov. 24	at Texas A&M

2011 RESULTS

W	Miami (OH)	17-6
L	at Arizona State (OT)	30-37
W	Western Illinois	69-0
L	at Oklahoma	28-38
L	at Kansas State	17-24
W	Iowa State	52-17
L	Oklahoma State	24-45
W	at Texas A&M (OT)	38-31
L	at Baylor	39-42
W	Texas	17-5
W	Texas Tech	31-27
W	at Kansas	24-10
	Independence Bowl	
W	vs. North Carolina	41-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.9	30
Rushing	244.0	9
Passing	231.5	64
Total	475.5	12
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.5	44
Rushing	127.4	29
Passing	252.6	94
Total	380.0	61
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.23	40

RANKING

31 AUBURN | TIGERS

SEC rank: 9 Record: 8-5 SEC record: 4-4 (4th, West) Stadium: Jordan-Hare (87,451)

Photo by RD MOORE

Corey Lemonier

"The word potential is a good word with our defensive line."
— Defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder

TIGERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Gene Chizik — At Auburn: 30-10, 3 years
OVERALL: 35-29, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scot Loeffler
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian VanGorder

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2008
RETURNING STARTERS: 18: 8 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kiehl Frazier, RB Corey Grant, TE Philip Lutzenkirchen, WR Emory Blake, OL Reese Dismukes, DE Corey Lemonier, DT Jeffrey Whitaker, LB Daren Bates

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Auburn returns quality veterans on both sides of the ball. The Tigers have a ton of speed at tailback. Fullback Jay Prosch instantly becomes one of the SEC's elite blockers. The defensive line is talented and deep at end and tackle. Special teams are solid across the board, especially in the kicking game.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The quarterback position is still unsettled. Size might be an issue at tailback. The offensive line is talented but young. The linebacking corps lacks significant depth. The secondary is still a work in progress. Both the offense and defense are learning new systems.

OFFENSE

New coordinator Scot Loeffler is a big proponent of a pro-style attack, so Auburn's offense will look much different than it did a year ago under the direction of Gus Malzahn. Loeffler's rushing attack at Temple last season ranked seventh nationally.

Kiehl Frazier and Clint Moseley remained in a battle for the starting quarterback job following spring practice. Frazier looked sharp in the A-Day Game, and he'd give the Tigers a dual-threat option.

Returning senior Onterio McCalebb, sophomores Corey Grant and Tre Mason and freshman Mike Blakely will all get touches in the backfield, as could signee Jovon Robinson. Both Blakely and Grant flashed good burst in the A-Day Game.

Illinois transfer Jay Prosch will be a welcome addition to Auburn's new-look ground attack. Prosch, a big-hitting fullback, could help solve the Tigers' struggles in short-yardage situations.

Philip Lutzenkirchen and Emory Blake could be in line for big senior seasons. Lutzenkirchen is a *Lindy's* second team All-American, while Blake is one of the top wideouts in the SEC.

Center Reese Dismukes returns to anchor a maturing offensive line. Greg Robinson, who redshirted a year ago, will make his highly-anticipated debut at left tackle.

DEFENSE

It was trial by fire last year for Auburn's young and inexperienced defense, but that could parlay into improved results in 2012.

Throw in the fact that new coordinator Brian VanGorder — who runs a base 4-3 defense — is now in charge, and the future looks bright for the Tigers defensively.

With the return of veteran ends Corey Lemonier, Dee Ford, Craig Sanders and Nosa Eguae — along with tackles Jeffrey Whitaker, Angelo Blackson, Kenneth Carter, Gabe Wright and Devaunte Sigler — Auburn has the potential to be very good up front. VanGorder singled out Lemonier and Ford for their efforts in spring practice.

Senior Daren Bates, who led the team in tackles, returns at one outside linebacker spot. He'll be flanked by Jake Holland at middle linebacker. Kris Frost, who drew rave reviews during the spring, is in line to be the other outside 'backer.

The secondary will be under the direction of new coach Willie Martinez. Chris Davis had a good spring practice and will be a veteran presence at cornerback. T'Sharvan Bell and Demetruce McNeal also have starting experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Cody Parkey connected on 13 of 18 field-goal attempts a year ago and was 41 of 42 on PATs. Punter Steven Clark gets great hang time on his kicks. Last year, he forced 34 fair catches and had 33 punts downed inside the 20.

McCalebb, Mason and Quan Bray give the Tigers three great return men.

OVERVIEW

The Tigers are still a maturing football team under Gene Chizik and his two new coordinators. But with a more home-friendly schedule and more experience on the roster, Auburn could approach double-digit wins if everything falls in place. However, this team may be one year away from being an SEC title contender.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Kris Frost: Frost, a physical player who likes contact, injured his shoulder a year ago and redshirted. His athletic ability is off the charts, but it's his instincts that could make him a future star.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	10	Kiehl Frazier	6-2	228	So.
TB	**23**	**Onterio McCalebb***	**5-11**	**174**	**Sr.**
FB	35	Jay Prosch	6-0	253	Jr.
WR	85	Travante Stallworth	5-9	188	Sr.
WR	**80**	**Emory Blake***	**6-2**	**197**	**Sr.**
TE	**43**	**Philip Lutzenkirchen***	**6-5**	**256**	**Sr.**
LT	73	Greg Robinson	6-5	309	Fr.
LG	**71**	**John Sullen***	**6-5**	**336**	**Sr.**
C	**50**	**Reese Dismukes***	**6-3**	**302**	**So.**
RG	57	Christian Westerman	6-3	298	Fr.
RT	**62**	**Chad Slade***	**6-5**	**314**	**So.**

DEFENSE

DE	95	Dee Ford	6-2	245	Jr.
DT	**54**	**Jeffrey Whitaker***	**6-4**	**301**	**Jr.**
DT	98	Angelo Blackson	6-4	316	So.
DE	**55**	**Corey Lemonier***	**6-4**	**240**	**Jr.**
LB	17	Kris Frost	6-2	225	Fr.
LB	5	Jake Holland	6-1	236	Jr.
LB	**25**	**Daren Bates***	**5-11**	**211**	**Sr.**
CB	**11**	**Chris Davis***	**5-11**	**196**	**Jr.**
CB	**22**	**T'Sharvan Bell***	**6-0**	**177**	**Sr.**
SS	**12**	**Demetruce McNeal***	**6-2**	**193**	**Jr.**
FS	24	Ryan Smith	6-2	208	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	**36**	**Cody Parkey***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
P	**30**	**Steven Clark***	**6-5**	**226**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Clemson (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 8	at Mississippi State
Sept. 15	ULM
Sept. 22	LSU
Oct. 6	ARKANSAS
Oct. 13	at Ole Miss
Oct. 20	at Vanderbilt
Oct. 27	TEXAS A&M
Nov. 3	NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 10	GEORGIA
Nov. 17	ALABAMA A&M
Nov. 24	at Alabama

2011 RESULTS

W	UTAH STATE	42-38
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	41-34
L	at Clemson	24-38
W	FAU	30-14
W	at South Carolina	16-13
L	at Arkansas	14-38
W	FLORIDA	17-6
L	at LSU	10-45
W	OLE MISS	41-23
L	at Georgia	7-45
W	SAMFORD	35-16
L	ALABAMA	14-42
	Chick-fil-A Bowl	
W	vs. Virginia	43-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.7	70
Rushing	182.3	32
Passing	155.5	105
Total	337.9	100
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.9	78
Rushing	189.2	94
Passing	218.8	51
Total	408.0	81
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	44

RANKING

37 TENNESSEE | VOLUNTEERS

SEC rank: 10 Record: 5-7 SEC record: 1-7 (6th, East) Stadium: Neyland Stadium (102,455)

Photo by Grant B. Duncan/Icon SMI

"He can jump out of the gym and twist around in five different pretzels and catch it." — Offensive coordinator Jim Chaney, on WR Justin Hunter

VOLUNTEERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Derek Dooley — At Tennessee: 11-14, 2 years
OVERALL: 28-34 overall, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Chaney
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sal Sunseri

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST BOWL: 2010, Music City
RETURNING STARTERS: 20; 10 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tyler Bray, WR Justin Hunter, WR Da'Rick Rogers, LB A.J. Johnson, LB Curt Maggitt, DB Prentiss Waggner, DB Brian Randolph

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: No SEC team has more talented receivers, and Bray is one of the SEC's elite quarterbacks. The offensive line — underachievers in recent years — should be ready to emerge. On defense, UT has quality linebackers in Johnson, Maggitt and Herman Lathers.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Last season's run game was the worst at UT since 1964, averaging 2.8 yards per carry, and Tauren Poole, a former 1,000-yard rusher, is gone. The Vols might not have the personnel to run a 3-4 defense, and the secondary, despite plenty of athletes, hasn't jelled in years. Another concern: overall leadership.

OFFENSE

Tennessee's run game was so bad last season that 41 running backs and three quarterbacks across the nation had more rushing yards than the Volunteers.

Coach Derek Dooley put his spring emphasis on developing a physical approach to the ground attack. That seems doable with a line that enters the season with 99 combined starts.

Coordinator Jim Chaney said the Vols gave up on the run game too easily last season, which is easy to do with gunslinger Tyler Bray at quarterback and the talented receiver duo of Justin Hunter and Da'Rick Rogers.

Bray has six 300-yard games and 35 touchdown passes in only 12 career starts, but he has yet to lead UT to victory over an SEC team with a winning record.

Rogers caught 67 passes for 1,040 yards last season and made first-team All-SEC. Hunter, coming back from a torn ACL in the third game of last season, is even more talented. Tight end Mychal Rivera could have a 40-catch season.

UT's running backs are unproven. Marlin Lane Jr. was OK as a freshman; fleet-footed Rajion Neal has dabbled at receiver; cat-quick Devrin Young (5-7, 175) probably can't handle more than 15 touches a game.

The offensive line returns all five starters, led by right tackle Ja'Wuan James and left guard Dallas Thomas. Alex Bullard is one of the SEC's top centers.

DEFENSE

Dooley hired Sal Sunseri when coordinator Justin Wilcox left for Washington. Sunseri, who spent the previous three years helping Alabama win two national championships, installed about 80 percent of his 3-4 alignment during the spring.

UT doesn't have all the body types necessary for a 3-4, as the defensive ends are a bit light for the position. That has required some shifting of duties; ends Jacques Smith and Willie Bohannon were moved to outside linebacker.

The linebacker position should be strong. A.J. Johnson earned Freshman All-America honors last years and recorded 80 tackles, second most ever by a UT freshman to Eric Berry. Curt Maggitt made the SEC All-Freshman team. And senior Herman Lathers, who missed last year due to injury, had a strong spring.

The defensive line is suspect, but 380-pound junior college signee Daniel McCullers could provide immediate help in the middle.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Michael Palardy is back after making just 9 of 14 field-goal attempts last season, with two blocked due to his low trajectory. Matt Darr averaged 38.1 yards per punt, his highlight coming on a 30-yard run after an errant snap.

Freshman Devrin Young sparked the return units last season. He averaged 23.3 yards on kick returns, but his production waned as the season progressed.

OVERVIEW

Dooley, who has seven new assistants on staff, has improved the roster considerably since he took over, and the passing game could be the best in the SEC. But the Vols will have to mount a run game and make more big plays on defense to threaten the best in the SEC East over the course of the season.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Cordarrelle Patterson: He was ranked as the nation's No. 1 junior college player after catching 61 passes for 924 yards and 15 touchdowns at Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College. He also averaged 48.2 yards on 10 kickoff returns with three touchdowns.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**8**	**Tyler Bray***	**6-6**	**213**	**Jr.**
RB	15	Marlin Lane Jr.	6-0	205	So.
FB	**39**	**Ben Bartholomew***	**6-2**	**251**	**Sr.**
WR	11	Justin Hunter	6-4	200	Jr.
WR	**21**	**Da'Rick Rogers***	**6-3**	**208**	**Jr.**
TE	**81**	**Mychal Rivera***	**6-3**	**251**	**Sr.**
LT	74	Tiny Richardson	6-6	329	So.
LG	**71**	**Dallas Thomas***	**6-5**	**300**	**Sr.**
C	**78**	**Alex Bullard***	**6-2**	**304**	**Jr.**
RG	**72**	**Zach Fulton***	**6-5**	**319**	**Jr.**
RT	**70**	**Ja'Wuan James***	**6-6**	**320**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	94	Darrington Sentimore	6-3	288	Jr.
NT	44	Mo Couch	6-2	295	Jr.
DE	58	Marlon Walls	6-2	283	Jr.
LB	**56**	**Curt Maggitt***	**6-3**	**227**	**So.**
LB	**45**	**A.J. Johnson***	**6-3**	**244**	**So.**
LB	34	Herman Lathers	6-0	225	Sr.
LB	**55**	**Jacques Smith***	**6-2**	**242**	**Jr.**
CB	**23**	**Prentiss Waggner***	**6-2**	**180**	**Sr.**
CB	27	Justin Coleman	5-10	180	So.
SS	**37**	**Brian Randolph***	**6-0**	**189**	**So.**
FS	3	Byron Moore	6-1	196	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**1**	**Michael Palardy***	**5-11**	**177**	**Jr.**
P	**43**	**Matt Darr***	**6-1**	**214**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	vs. NC State (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 8	GEORGIA STATE
Sept. 15	FLORIDA
Sept. 22	AKRON
Sept. 29	at Georgia
Oct. 13	at Mississippi State
Oct. 20	ALABAMA
Oct. 27	at South Carolina
Nov. 3	TROY
Nov. 10	MISSOURI
Nov. 17	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 24	KENTUCKY

2011 RESULTS

W	MONTANA	42-16
W	CINCINNATI	45-23
L	at Florida	23-33
W	BUFFALO	41-10
L	GEORGIA	12-20
L	LSU	7-38
L	at Alabama	6-37
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	3-14
W	MIDDLE TENNEESSE STATE	24-0
L	at Arkansas	7-49
W	VANDERBILT	27-21
L	at Kentucky	7-10

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.3	106
Rushing	90.1	116
Passing	242.6	50
Total	332.7	104
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.6	36
Rushing	162.7	69
Passing	177.8	12
Total	340.5	28
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
0	+0.0	59

RANKING

46 MISSISSIPPI STATE | BULLDOGS

SEC rank: 11 Record: 7-6 SEC record: 2-6 SEC (5th, West) Stadium: Davis Wade Stadium (55,082)

Photo by Michael Wade

"We've changed a whole bunch offensively, as you can see. We're flinging the ball around."
— Offensive coordinator Les Koenning

BULLDOGS at a GLANCE

COACH: Dan Mullen: At Mississippi State and overall: 21-17, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Les Koenning
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Chris Wilson, Geoff Collins

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1941
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tyler Russell, OG Tobias Smith, TE Malcolm Johnson, DE Denico Autry, DT Josh Boyd, CB Johnthan Banks, S Nickoe Whitley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The receivers finally appear to be in sync with Russell in the passing game, and the tight end position has suddenly become a key to chewing up yards and finding mismatches in the middle of the field. The defensive line, led by Boyd, is deep. Banks is an All-American candidate in the secondary.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Russell can throw the ball, but will he have the time needed to do so? The offensive line is a mess — position coach John Hevesy moved players around all spring looking for the right mix — and Smith, the best lineman, missed spring practices as he recovered from an ACL injury he suffered in the fall. Depth is a concern at safety.

OFFENSE

Junior quarterback Tyler Russell is finally Mississippi State's man.

The former *Parade* All-American split snaps his first two seasons in Starkville but will be the Bulldogs' starter in a revamped, pass-first scheme. He threw for 1,034 yards last season, a mark that will likely double this season.

Junior LaDarius Perkins (87 carries, 422 yards) will take over at running back and has bulked up to become a better every-down tailback capable of taking a beating between the tackles. If Perkins is unable to take the punishment, sophomore Nick Griffin and freshman Josh Robinson are more than willing to take over the job.

Sophomore tight ends Malcolm Johnson and Brandon Hill were used often in the passing game during the spring. The only knock on their game is they still have plenty to work on as blockers, but coach Dan Mullen was not afraid to throw around comparisons to former Florida star and current New England Patriot Aaron Hernandez in the spring.

The question is whether the offensive line can hold its own.

The Bulldogs struggled up front last season, especially when Russell took over as quarterback. Right guard Tobias Smith will be a much-needed addition after undergoing surgery on an ACL injury three games into the 2011 season.

DEFENSE

Seven starters return from last season, and senior Josh Boyd leads a deep defensive line hoping to increase the 21 sacks they produced a year ago.

The Bulldogs' bend-but-don't-break mentality worked last season, ranking fourth in the SEC in scoring defense (19.7 points per game).

Newcomer Denico Autry, a defensive end transfer from East Mississippi Community College, was impressive in the spring and is expected to start after he totaled 41 quarterback hurries as an NJCAA All-American. Kaleb Eulls, who can move inside or stay on the edge, and Curtis Virges add depth.

Cornerbacks Johnthan Banks (five interceptions) and Corey Broomfield return as starters. Both were named Freshman All-SEC in their first seasons.

The questions on the team reside at middle linebacker — career reserve Ferlando Bohanna and freshman Benardrick McKinney will battle for the starting job — and at safety.

Safety Nickoe Whitley is the hardest-hitting player on the team and had four interceptions last season, but he was knocked out of action with a ruptured Achilles' near the end of the season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Only punter Baker Swedenburg returns; he pinned teams inside the 20-yard line 19 times last season. Freshman Devon Bell, who hit a 55-yarder in high school, likely will be counted on as the Bulldogs' placekicker.

OVERVIEW

The offense is undergoing a small tweak with a pass-first approach, but if it struggles early, the Bulldogs can lean on their strong defense as they did in 2011. Winning seven games might be considered a disappointment, especially with a favorable early schedule. The back half of the season will tell the tale about the Bulldogs' success.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Denico Autry: Autry gives MSU some size (6-5, 255 pounds), speed and depth at defensive end after the Bulldogs failed to get substantial production from the spot last season. He was an NJCAA All-American at East Mississippi Community College.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	17	Tyler Russell	6-4	220	Jr.
RB	27	LaDarius Perkins	5-10	190	Jr.
WR	**19**	**Arceto Clark***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
WR	**1**	**Chad Bumphis***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
WR	**8**	**Chris Smith***	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
TE	80	Malcolm Johnson	6-2	230	So.
LT	75	Blaine Clausell	6-7	305	So.
LG	**61**	**Gabe Jackson***	**6-4**	**320**	**Jr.**
C	63	Dillon Day	6-4	285	So.
RG	67	Tobias Smith	6-3	305	Sr.
RT	78	Damien Robinson	6-7	315	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	**92**	**Kaleb Eulls***	**6-4**	**280**	**So.**
DT	**97**	**Josh Boyd***	**6-3**	**300**	**Sr.**
DT	60	Devin Jones	6-1	260	Sr.
DE	99	Denico Autry	6-5	255	Jr.
LB	**51**	**Deontae Skinner***	**6-2**	**245**	**Jr.**
LB	52	Ferlando Bohanna	6-0	225	So.
LB	**10**	**Cameron Lawrence***	**6-3**	**230**	**Sr.**
CB	**13**	**Johnthan Banks***	**6-2**	**185**	**Sr.**
CB	**25**	**Corey Broomfield***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
SS	20	Louis Watson	5-11	185	Sr.
FS	**5**	**Nickoe Whitley***	**6-1**	**205**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	17	Devon Bell	6-3	190	Fr.
P	**39**	**Baker Swedenburg***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	JACKSON STATE
Sept. 8	AUBURN
Sept. 15	at Troy
Sept. 22	SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 6	at Kentucky
Oct. 13	TENNESSEE
Oct. 20	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 27	at Alabama
Nov. 3	TEXAS A&M
Nov. 10	at LSU
Nov. 17	ARKANSAS
Nov. 24	at Ole Miss

2011 RESULTS

W	at Memphis	59-14
L	at Auburn	34-41
L	LSU	6-19
W	LOUISIANA TECH (OT)	26-20
L	at Georgia	10-24
W	at UAB	21-3
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	12-14
W	at Kentucky	28-16
W	TENNESSEE-MARTIN	55-17
L	ALABAMA	7-24
L	at Arkansas	17-44
W	OLE MISS	31-3
	Music City Bowl	
W	vs. Wake Forest	23-17

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.3	73
Rushing	175.3	38
Passing	181.9	94
Total	357.2	84
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.7	16
Rushing	153.5	61
Passing	197.2	27
Total	350.6	35
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
0	+ 0.0	59

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TIDE DEFENSE RETOOLS FOR ANOTHER NATIONAL TITLE RUN

BY RUBIN E. GRANT

Photo by RD Moore

Vinnie Sunseri

In the final hours leading up to the 2012 NFL draft, five Alabama players were projected to go in the first round. Other than running back Trent Richardson, four were expected to be chosen from the Crimson Tide's dazzling 2011 defense that propelled Alabama to its second national championship under head coach Nick Saban and 14th in school history.

The foursome included All-America linebacker Courtney Upshaw, All-America safety Mark Barron, All-SEC linebacker Dont'a Hightower and All-SEC cornerback Dre Kirkpatrick. In addition to them, cornerback DeQuan Menzie, linebacker Jerrell Harris and nose tackle Josh Chapman also were expected to be taken in the mid- to late rounds.

Those magnificent seven formed the core of a Tide defense that led the nation in rushing defense (72.2 yards per game), passing defense (111.5 ypg), total defense (183.6 ypg) and scoring defense (8.2 points per game), as Alabama became the only second defense since 1937 (when stats began to be kept) to finish first in rushing, passing and total defense. The other was Barry Switzer's 1986 Oklahoma squad.

Saban, who became the first coach to win three BCS titles, called his defense "a hateful bunch" after the Tide's dominating 21-0 performance in the BCS national championship game against LSU. LSU did not cross midfield until 7:30 was left in the fourth quarter. The Tigers were held to 17 rushing yards and one first down in the first half and finished with 39 yards on the ground, 92 overall and just five first downs.

Those amazing numbers from an amazing group prompted ESPN college football analyst Lee Corso to proclaim Alabama's defense the best ever.

"Before the game against LSU, I was comparing the defense from Alabama to the 1986 Oklahoma defense, which was considered by many as the best defense in college football," Corso said. "But after that game, after Nick's great performance, they went down as the greatest defense in college football."

The influx of talent into the NFL off that defense certainly gives Corso's assessment validity, but if you think the Tide's defensive cupboard is bare as they embark on the 2012 national title, think again. There are some who believe the Tide's 2012 defense will be better than the "hateful bunch" from 2011.

In other words, Alabama is simply retooling with an abundance of talent still on hand to run Saban's attacking 3-4 defensive scheme and make opponents spend some extra time in the film room trying to figure out a way to move the ball and score some points against the suffocating Tide defenders.

As Saban once said, "The trademark of our defense will be effort, toughness, and no mental mistakes regarding score or situation in any game."

It should not come as a surprise that the Tide is loaded on the defensive side of the football. That's the way Saban recruits. His 2012 signing class included five defensive linemen, five linebackers and four defensive backs.

"I think that's really a key to having a successful program on offense, defense, or special teams," Saban said. "I've talked about this before, but I think the fact that we sort of develop a criteria for what we're looking for in recruiting in terms of the character and attitude and intelligence a guy has, the physical abilities that he has to play the position based on the critical factors that we think are important, and the size and speed that they have to do it, and that's what we look for in players. I think that when we recruit players that fit our criteria, they have a better opportunity to be successful, and I think we have a better opportunity to be successful in what we do."

With the optimum word being success, hard-hitting sophomore Vinnie Sunseri is ready to step in for Barron at safety. He made a name for himself last season with some punishing hits on special teams and is expected to provide some leadership, even though his dad, Sal Sunseri, left Alabama as the team's outside

Nico Johnson

Photo by Spruce Derden-US PRESSWIRE

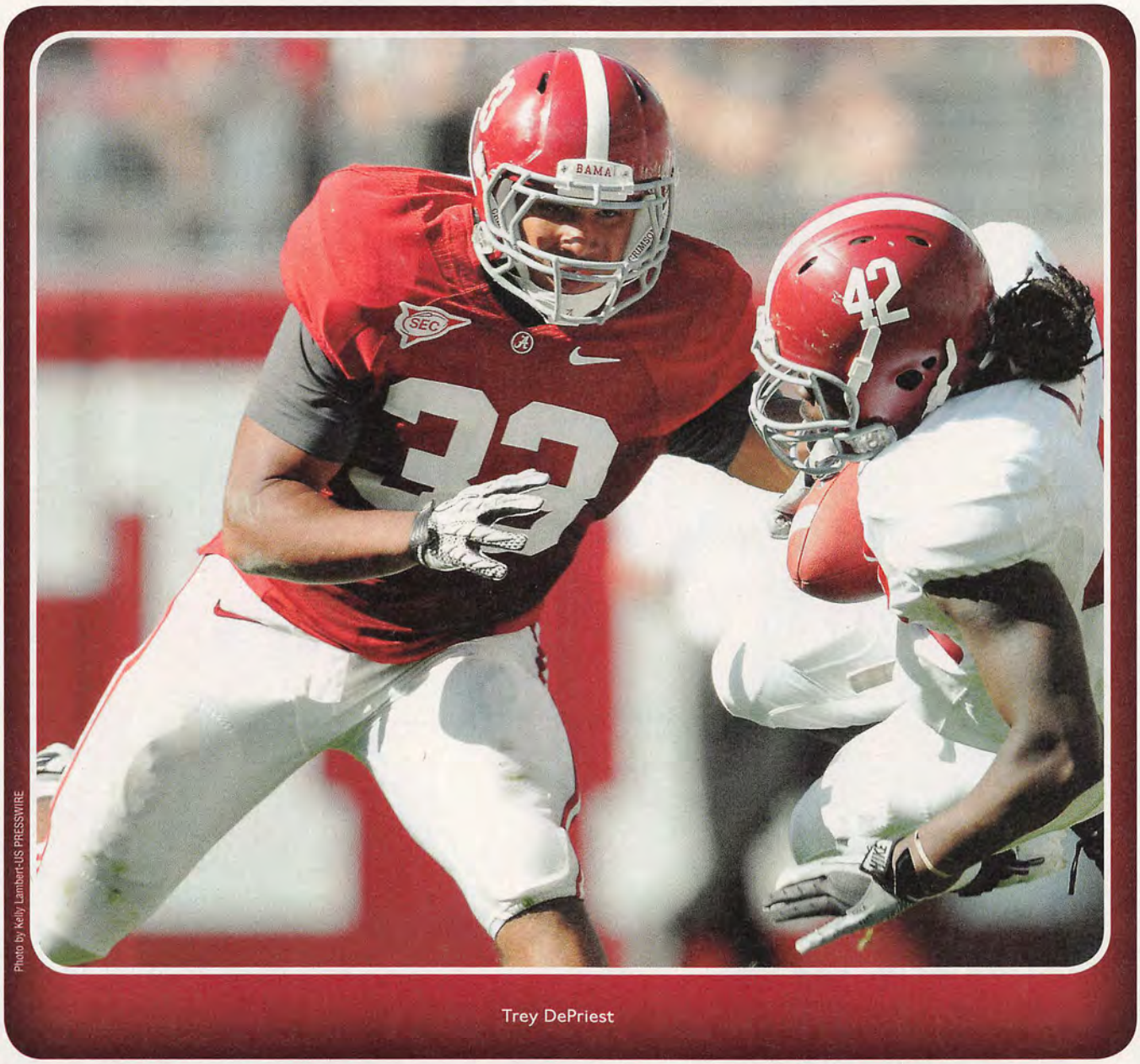

Photo by Kelly Lambert-US PRESSWIRE

Trey DePriest

linebackers coach to become defensive coordinator at rival Tennessee.

"Right now for me to be a leader, I feel like I just need to play my role," said Vinnie Sunseri, whose brother is Pittsburgh quarterback Tino Sunseri. "I've got a lot of supporting cast around me. I don't need to go and try to do too much. I'm going to let the people that have earned the right to be leaders lead, and I'll just follow a little bit behind and learn from these guys."

The supporting cast around Sunseri could include either John Fulton or junior college transfers Deion Belue and Travell Dixon at cornerback, filling the void created by the departures of Kirkpatrick and Menzie. Belue played at Northeast Mississippi Community College after prepping at Deshler High School in Tuscumbia. Dixon is from Eastern Arizona College via Norland High School in Miami, Fla.

"We were pleased that we were able to get both of those guys," Saban said. "We felt that with DeQuan Menzie graduating and Dre (Kirkpatrick) deciding to go out early for the draft, that you always have to assess if you have potential starters at those positions. We only usually recruit junior college guys here if we have a need, most of those guys have been very successful, and Deion Belue is a guy that we recruited out of high school, because we thought he was a very good player.

"Travell is a guy that we thought was one of the best junior college corners out there, so while we don't know how they're going to progress in our system, in our program here, we're excited about the ability that they have and how they may contribute, and how it gives us a little more experienced, a little more mature player to play at a position where we have a need created by the guys that we lost."

Following the Tide's A-Day game, Saban noted Belue still had some work to do before the season begins.

"Deion had a really good spring," Saban said. "He's a really good cover guy. I think sometimes he's not sure

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exactly what he's doing. We definitely need to get him to be a little more physical in run support and some of those things, but I think he's going to be a good player."

If Belue doesn't start, Fulton likely will. "John had a good spring," Saban said. "(He's) starting to show that he's more confident in what he's doing. (He) knows what to do out there, and now it's just a matter of doing it with some kind of consistency."

Saban did not have to bring in anyone new to replace Hightower at middle linebacker because of the presence of Nico Johnson and C.J. Mosley. Johnson and Mosley shared the weak inside linebacker position last year, with Johnson as a run-stopper and Mosley playing in passing situations. Both are good enough to handle the run and pass, but Saban just wanted to get them on the field as much as possible.

Trey DePriest also could be in the mix at inside linebacker, while Adrian Hubbard and Xzavier Dickson look like they're ready to wreak havoc on the outside as Upshaw did.

In the A-Day game, Hubbard earned the Dwight Stephenson Lineman of the Game Award given to the contest's most valuable lineman. Playing for the victorious White team, Hubbard had seven tackles (six unassisted), including four tackles for losses of 22 yards and three quarterback sacks.

Hubbard, a 6-6, 250-pound physical specimen, wasn't overly impressed with his effort. "It was all right," he said modestly. "I haven't arrived yet. There's always room for improvement."

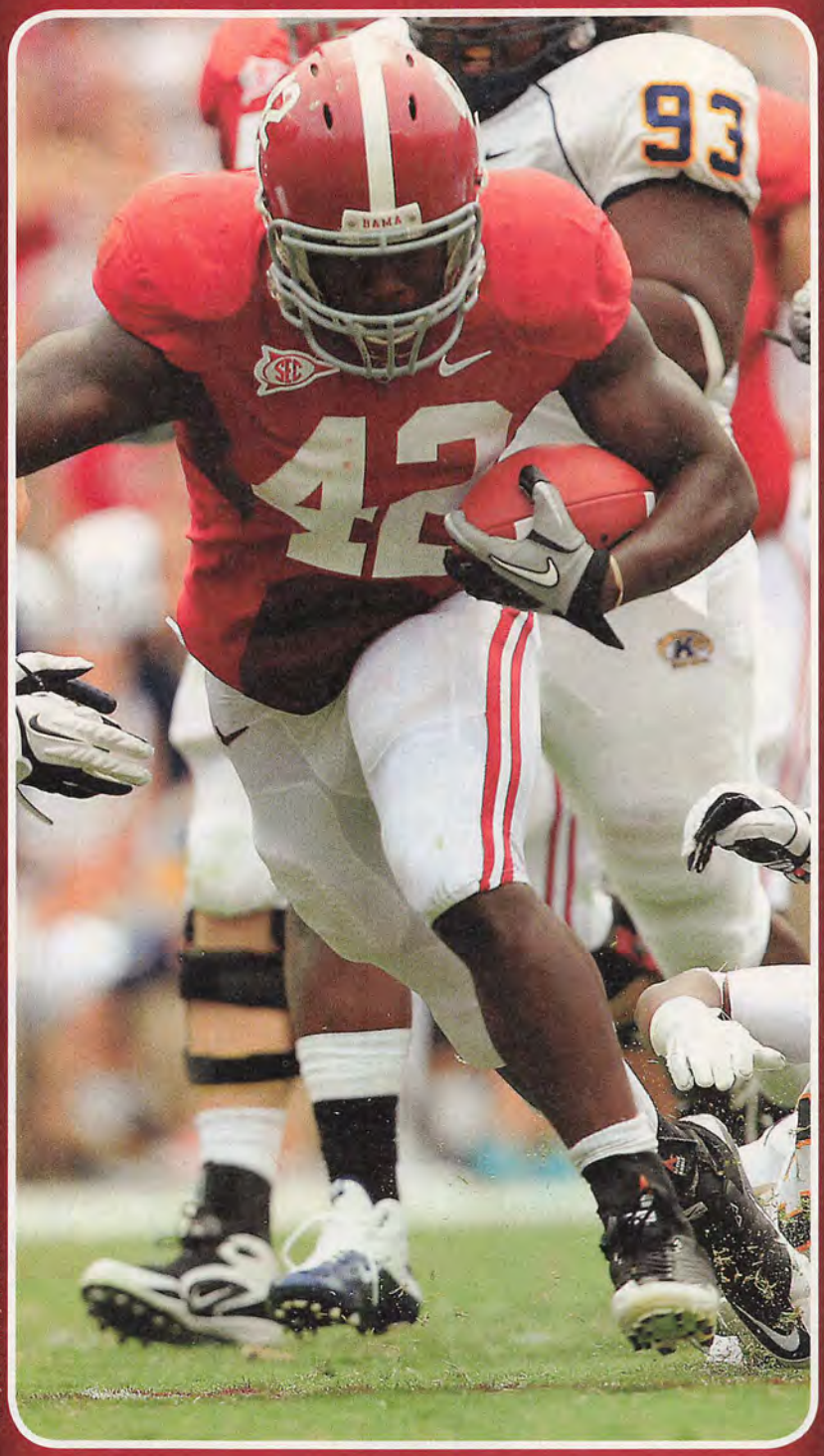
Alabama's defensive starters won't be entirely new in 2012. The Tide returns four starters, including Johnson, safety Robert Lester, back for his third season as a starter, and linemen Damion Square and Jesse Williams. The defense also will be bolstered by 2010 starting cornerback Dee Milliner, who has 17 games of starting experience as either a corner or nickel back.

Williams, Square, Ed Stinson and Quinton Dial will team with young defensive linemen such as Jeoffrey Pagan, LaMichael Fanning and D.J. Pettway to man the trenches, clog holes in the running games and put pressure on quarterbacks.

The 6-4, 320-pound Williams is moving from defensive end to nose tackle to replace Chapman in the middle of the front line. "It's a bit more close quarters as far as people, a lot more crunching with a lot of different people instead of just going with the tackle or the gap," Williams said.

The heavily tattooed Williams, a junior college transfer who replaced Marcell Dareus in 2011, had 24 tackles last season, including four for losses. At times, he moved inside when the Tide employed four-man fronts, enabling Upshaw and Hightower to rack up the majority of the sacks. Saban liked the way Williams performed in the spring, but said he could easily move back to his old spot if needed.

"He's done a really good job in there," Saban said. "I don't know which way we'll go. We feel like it's easier for us to move him back to five-technique (end) because that's where he played all last year."



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Eddie Lacy

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Because Saban likes to rotate guys to keep them fresh, some other names worth mentioning on the Tide's deep and talented defense are nose guard Brandon Ivory, outside linebacker Tana Patrick, outside linebacker Jonathan Atchison and safeties Jarrick Williams HaHa Clinton-Dix and Nick Perry. All of them should see plenty of action in the fall.

The Tide had two true freshmen to participate in spring practice, Dillon Lee, a 6-4, 240-pound linebacker, from Buford, Ga. and Ryan Anderson, a 6-2, 244-pound linebacker from Daphne. Both enrolled in January. Lee is an athletic, physical linebacker who spent time in the spring working both as an inside linebacker and an outside linebacker. He started at outside linebacker in the A-Day game and could be ready to contribute at either spot. Anderson came along more slowly, but in time could develop into a force on the outside.

The most hyped incoming freshman will arrive for fall camp, Landon Collins, a 6-0, 202-pound defensive back plucked away from LSU at Dutchtown High School in Geismar, La. Collins was rated the No. 1 safety prospect in the nation by ESPNU and was a *Parade* All-American. He has been clocked at 4.39 seconds in the 40-yard dash and has an astounding 43.5-inch vertical leap. He could make an immediate impact.

"We feel like Landon Collins is an outstanding player," Saban said. "He's a fine young man who was in our camps the last couple years. He has leadership qualities; he's a great competitor; he's a good student; he's a very bright young guy who I feel is going to be very successful here.

"We give everybody an opportunity to play as freshmen. The more mature guys that learn more quickly are the guys that have the best chance to contribute as freshmen. Landon's demonstrated all these qualities, but we certainly want to bring him along at his own pace, and when he's confident and ready to go, I'm sure he'll be a good player here."

Williams is eager to see how the Tide's defense stacks up to the 2011 unit. "We're certainly not the same team, but we've reloaded at a lot of positions," he said. "We had a lot of good, quality guys behind the guys that are leaving. We should be good."

He won't get any argument from All-America offensive lineman Barrett Jones, who has the luxury — although he might not put it that way — of going against the Tide's defense in practice. Jones liked what he saw from the defense in the spring.

"I've been really impressed with our defense, with the way we've had some guys step up," Jones said. "I'm not necessarily surprised, but it's been good to see that."

Saban is a little more guarded in his appraisal of the Tide's defensive potential and the team overall.

"How good is this team?" Saban said repeating a question. "I don't know, I think it's kind of up to this team. I think it's kind of up to a lot of players on this team, a lot of players that have opportunities that haven't played much before. We certainly don't have the maturity as a team that we had a year ago, or that we had three years ago, but there's certainly enough players on this team that we could develop into a pretty good team."

Rubin E. Grant is a freelance writer in Birmingham

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COMPETITION, TIGERS WILL BE BETTER THIS SEASON

BY LYN SCARBROUGH

"Competition breeds success."
– Old adage, source unknown

Photo by Todd Van Emst

Jeff Grimes

There had to be times during the 2011 season when Auburn offensive line coach Jeff Grimes was a frustrated man.

The defending national champions, especially against the toughest competition, too often just couldn't get it done offensively.

When it was time to pass, Auburn's inexperienced quarterbacks had to look for escape routes as often as they looked for receivers. The Tigers ranked ninth in the Southeastern Conference in sacks allowed, just three fewer than 12th-ranked Kentucky, giving up almost twice as many as Alabama, LSU and even Tennessee, which had only one SEC win.

The short-yardage game didn't fare much better when it counted. Auburn ranked eighth in third-down conversions, succeeding barely over one-third of the time. That rate was even lower against top-tier opponents. LSU and Alabama, the two best teams in the Western Division, changed third down to first down around 45 per cent of the time.

On a per-play basis, the Tiger offense averaged 5.3 yards per play. That doesn't sound bad, but how did that compare to the other league teams? Arkansas and Alabama, the top teams in total offense, averaged over a yard more per play. Seven conference teams ranked higher than the Tigers, including Mississippi State.

Based on those numbers, it was impressive that Auburn actually had eight victories. They won in Columbia against South Carolina, an 11-win team that finished in the Top 10. They defeated Florida, holding the Gators to just two field goals.

They did lose five games, but three of the losses were to teams that finished in the Top 5 in the final polls ... Alabama (1), LSU (2), Arkansas (5) ... all members of their same SEC division. The other two losses were against Clemson (10 wins, Atlantic Coast Conference champions) and Georgia (10 wins, SEC Eastern Division champion). And, four of those games were on the road.

Still, by Auburn standards, 2011 was a disappointing season. Offensive shortfalls were a primary reason, and that starts with the offensive line. If the quarterback is running for his life, and the team can't make 3rd-and-2 in a key situation, the outcome usually will be disappointing.

"It was tough on us at times last season," said sophomore Reese Dismukes, the center who started from the first game as a true freshman. "It was stressful."

A former high school All-American from Spanish Fort in south Alabama, he put more emphasis on the magnitude of the losses. In the five defeats, the average score was 41-14. For sure, the overall defensive performance wasn't good. But, a lot of that was because the offense couldn't stay on the field.

A lot of things will be different for the 2012 season.

• There is a new coordinator with a new system. When innovative offensive guru Gus Malzahn left to take his first head coaching job at Arkansas State, Auburn coach Gene Chizik reached out to Scot Loeffler, the offensive coordinator at Temple, where he turned the Owl offense into a national leader.

As the quarterback coach at Michigan and Florida, Loeffler's pupils included Tom Brady, Tim Tebow, Brian Griese, Chad Henne, Drew Henson and John Navarre.

• Jeff Grimes returns three starters up front ... guards Chad Slade and John Sullen, along with Dismukes ... plus three others who earned letters a year ago (Blake Burgess, Eric Mack, Tunde Fariyike).

• Add in members of the highly rated 2011 signing class, several of whom redshirted last season, plus the incoming 2012 offensive line class, rated the second-best nationally by Rivals.com.

That all adds up to a magic word for Grimes ... *competition*.

"For the first time since we've been at Auburn, we have depth, and we're excited about that," he said. "We'll have a scholarship group of about 15. We've been fighting that every year, not having an adequate number of guys to have enough

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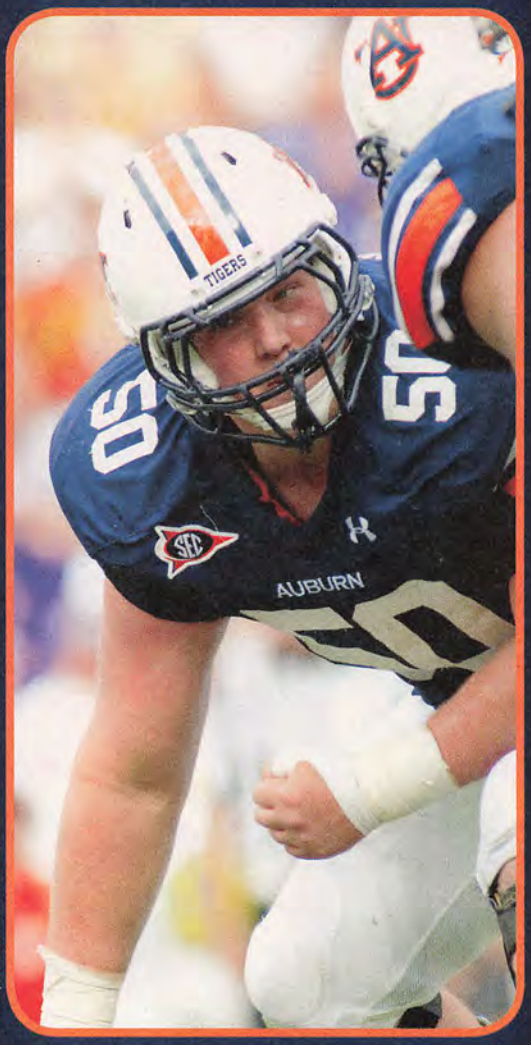

Photo by John Korduner / Icon SMI

Reese Dismukes

Photo by Greg McWilliams/Icon SMI

Chad Slade

competition.

"We're going to give everybody a chance to perform. We have seven offensive linemen coming in with this class and I've told them all that they better come in ready to play."

Coaches and players realized a change for the better during spring drills.

"Anytime that there's a new system, it creates change with a different mindset," Grimes said. "Coach Loeffler gets it with this system. In our system, the line should be the heartbeat of the offense. That's the mentality that we're starting with. We will be a more under-center offense, probably more NFL style in protection. That lets us do things that every lineman wants to do. They're excited about it."

His players echoed that sentiment.

"Our new offense is more pro-style," Dismukes said. "Most college players have a goal to play in the NFL, so this system helps us in that way. It allows for more protections, especially in the throwing game.

"Everybody understands what has to be done to be reliable — just do your job. This system is built around having a strong offensive line, so we have to be the toughest one around."

This Auburn coaching staff has gone after that caliber of offensive lineman, wherever it has taken them.

The 2010 signing class included Mack from South Carolina, the No. 6 guard in the country according to Rivals.com; five-star Shon Coleman, the No. 3 tackle nationally and No. 1 player in Mississippi; and Slade.

The 2011 class included Greg Robinson from Louisiana, the nation's No. 2 guard; Christian Westerman, rated the No. 3 tackle in the country and the No. 1 player in Arizona; and Dismukes.

The most recent class included five linemen ranked four-stars by Rivals.com — Shane Callahan and Alex Kozan from Colorado; tackle Avery Young, the No. 2 lineman in Florida; tackle Jordan Diamond from Chicago; and Patrick Miller, another Florida tackle, who enrolled early and made an impact during spring drills.

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"We're not necessarily trying to go nationwide by design," Grimes explained. "We intend to stay strong in this state and in this region. Of course, winning the national championship has had advantages, increasing our exposure around the country. We're never going to say 'no' to a great player."

For sure, Grimes player list is now loaded with "great" players.

"We do have a lot of talent," he acknowledged. "But, they are young and there's always a learning curve. We bit

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Auburn's offensive line needs to build on a strong Chick-fil-A Bowl performance.

the bullet last year and redshirted some guys when they probably could have helped us. That decision should really begin to pay dividends this year. We kept those guys on the travel squad, so they've had that experience."

Slade knows what that's like. A sophomore from Moody, Ala., he redshirted during the national championship season, then started against Utah State last September.

"I remember how I was really nervous before the first game," he said. "I had never played in front of 87,000 people before, much less on television. The biggest crowd that ever watched me was 3,000 in high school. But, Brandon (Mosley) talked with me about it and told me what to expect. After the first snap, things were OK."

Even though they're still young, the returning starters realize their role.

"Playing last season was the best thing for me," said Dismukes, who was named first-team Freshman All-American. "Experience-wise, I know what to expect. That should be valuable this season. I want to lead by example. I understand the center position. Our guys know that they can trust me, especially based on last season's experience."

But, he agrees that the redshirt year for most of the highly-touted linemen will help the team tremendously.

"We'll have so much more experience this year with the guys coming off redshirt," he said. "They got to see how things were done. They're definitely more ready than most first-year guys."

"We have to accept the responsibility to help teach the new guys," Slade added. "Whether it's watching film, spending extra time together, anything needed. We know from our experience that not every play will be a good one. We can't let the younger guys get down if that happens. You have to keep your head up and be ready for the next snap."

Grimes does want that leadership, but he doesn't really care where it comes from, as long as it's there.

"I don't really care who our leaders are," he said. "I don't care how old you are, whether a senior or a freshman. We're just looking for leaders to step up. If a player wants to be a leader with this group, he can take that role."

The veteran line coach did single out a couple of his young guys.

Patrick Miller, one of the last Auburn commitments in the 2012 class, enrolled early and participated in spring practice, sometimes running with the first-team.

Shon Coleman, one of the most highly-acclaimed linemen ever to sign with Auburn, was diagnosed with cancer shortly after National Signing Day in 2010. He has undergone treatment during all of that time, but was cleared to play by doctors during spring drills. He will sit out the 2012 season and be in the playing rotation in 2013.

"We knew that Patrick (Miller) was good when we recruited him," Grimes said. "But, 'yeah,' I was surprised at how well he did this spring. We knew that he enjoyed competition, but we didn't know if he had the intangibles to step right in and play. Usually, if you're playing a true freshman that much, you notice him on about every play. But, you didn't notice Patrick, so that's a compliment to him."

When the announcement was made that Coleman was cleared to practice, teammates gave him a standing ovation.

"It's just so good to have him out

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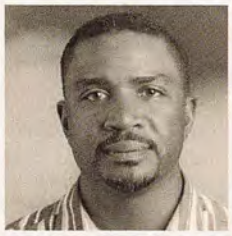

By Kenneth Hicks

Alabama Power Lineman

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there," Grimes said. "We're so glad that he can really feel fully part of the team now. Our course, he's been part of the team, but with the back-and-forth medical trips, he couldn't be at meetings and practices much of the time. You've got to give him so much credit. I've never seen him down, never discouraged or with a bad attitude."

Auburn's offensive linemen understand the part they played in last season's underachievement.

"Our offensive line does have something to prove," Slade said. "A lot of people think our line is the weakest part of our team. We've talked about it among ourselves. We know that we have to step it up. We have to put the offense on our backs. We have to continue to get better, no matter what.

"If we lead, the others will follow."

Grimes gave an interesting illustration.

"You know when you call a moving company to haul your furniture, at some point there are really big things to be moved," he said. "They'll have a couple of guys that do that heavy lifting. That's us. We take pride in being those guys.

"We're the 'big brothers' of the team, the point of the spear. We're the Marines storming the beach. What we do allows the skilled guys to show what their talent can do."

The Auburn skilled guys should have the talent to get it done.

Sophomore quarterback Kiehl Frazier was the *USA Today* National Offensive Player of the Year as a high school senior. There's a quartet of talented tailbacks ... Onterio McCalebb, Tre Mason, Corey Grant, Mike Blakley. Fullback Jay Prosch, a transfer from Illinois, was a first-team All-American last season. Emory Blake is among the SEC's best receivers. And, tight end Philip Lutzenkirchen is a *Lindy's* preseason All-American.

"Our skill position players are in a similar situation to our offensive line," Grimes said. "Young players are everywhere, but they're not just young. They're very good, very talented. We have so much confidence in those guys. It's just a matter of which ones can really develop in the next few months before the season gets started."

When the season does get going, the Tigers need to get going fast.

Auburn opens with ACC champion Clemson at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta on Labor Day weekend. A trip to Starkville follows the next Saturday. Win those two and Auburn is probably 3-0 when LSU comes to Jordan-Hare on Sept. 22 in a game with big-time national implications. Lose those two and the game against LSU becomes a fight for survival, needing a win to avoid being out of the SEC West race before the end of the first month.

"A fast start is important," Slade said. "We don't have a soft schedule to get it going this season. We have some dues to pay to Clemson for last year, then I'm sure State will come after us since we've won three in a row against them. If we win those, the LSU game should be a war."

Auburn coaches and players are working to be ready for the challenge.

"We're looking forward to it and we're in a better position to get prepared for it," Grimes said. "I'm not sure who our stating five will be when we take the field for the first game, but we're excited about it because of the competition. That will only make us better."

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PLAYING MORE PHYSICAL, ESPECIALLY IN RUN GAME, KEY TO TROY'S REVIVAL

BY MATT LOWE

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. And try to remember back to the year 1982.

Ronald Reagan was one year removed from being sworn in as the 40th President of the United States; Parachute pants were actually cool; The Clash was tearing up the pop charts with their smash hit, "Rock The Casbah;" and current Troy head coach Larry Blakeney was an assistant at Auburn. It was an interesting time indeed, but like the 2011 season, the one 29 years ago was one to forget for Troy fans, as that team finished 2-8.

In 2012, much like in '82, Troy stumbled to a 3-9 record, 2-6 in the Sun Belt, and sank down to the basement of the conference. It was an unusual place for a program that claimed a share of its fifth straight league title in 2010, and, quite frankly, it was very uncharacteristic of a Blakeney-coached team. But if one thing came out of the Trojans' most disappointing season in five years, it was that the team had to get more physical.

For years and years, the Trojans have not minded mixing it up with opponents. They like it. It's apart of the culture that is Troy football under coach Blakeney. But last year, being physical seemed to get lost in the shuffle throughout the duration of a grueling schedule, which featured out-of-conference opponents Clemson, Arkansas and Navy — and drastically improved conference foes.

The lack of physicality hurt the team in the running game, which cut off the Trojans' ability to sustain drives and convert on short yardage. It also affected the defense, which stayed on the field longer. Add it up and it's easy to see why Troy only averaged 88.7 yards per game on the ground, which ranked 117th nationally.

After some re-evaluating, Blakeney and his staff have stressed the need to get physical on every unit of the team — especially in the running game — during the spring, which will be a big factor in getting Troy back on track this fall.

"It (run game) is an area that we've tried to address this offseason," Blakeney said. "We've changed some things. We've become a more physical — not physical enough yet — offensive football team up front with the way we have finished runs this spring. I've really been pleased with that.

"We've got a good hold on what we need to do, and I think we've been a better running football team, certainly better than 100 yards per game, or at least equal to that right now, and hopefully better. And it really sets you up for some great drives and drive starters and a way to convert 3rd-and-mediums.

"We think we've got a good concept with some things that we're doing, and calling, the way we're calling it sometimes, so we're excited about that and we hope its something we can continue to evolve and develop through the fall camp."

With the return of three starting offensive linemen (guards Kyle Wilborn and Zach Johnson and right tackle Terrence Jones) and a great one-two punch at tailback — the explosive Shawn Southward and powerful D.J. Taylor — the Trojans hope to get the ground game back to respectability.

Southward followed a junior season, in which he rushed for 556 yards and four touchdowns, with a great spring. Blakeney complimented Southward, and Taylor, a senior, for their efforts in the spring.

"I hope I'm not looking through rose-colored glasses, but D.J. Taylor and Shawn Southward have really taken the bull by the horns. They both did a good job of finishing runs, which was good to see." Blakeney said.

Taylor, a big (6-0, 230), physical back, broke off several long runs during spring scrimmages. Last season, he rushed for 367 yards on 82 carries and scored six times. He also caught 15 passes out of the backfield.

But when it boils down to it, Troy's longtime coach thinks running the football and being physical comes down to one thing: attitude.

"It's just attitude. We've got to be a more physical football team and sometimes the way we address the offensive side, we are not as good on defense," Blakeney said,"and we're not good enough to run it when we need to, have to and want to. But (the run game) over the years, it's been good to us, except for last year.

"We've been champions; we've won a bunch of games, been to some bowls, but we've got to readdress where college football is, where the Sun Belt is, where our competition is. And we've got to be a more physical running football team, which will help us on offense and defense."

Photo by John Korduner/Icon SMI

Shawn Southward

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UAB TALENT LEVEL

BY RUBIN E. GRANT

Pleasant Surprise for Coach McGee

On the day he was introduced as the fourth head coach in the history of the UAB football program, Garrick McGee mentioned his enthusiasm about the Blazers' player personnel and their commitment.

What McGee didn't know was just how much talent he was inheriting. After all, the Blazers finished the 2011 season with a 3-9 record, their seventh consecutive losing season and fourth straight under Coach Neil Callaway, prompting his resignation.

In stepped McGee, who had been the offensive coordinator at Arkansas the past two seasons and was a finalist for the 2011 Broyles Award, which is presented to the nation's top assistant coach.

"I want to have a group of young men heading in the right direction who are committed to doing the right things on and off the field and they understand that winning is the final result of doing everything else right," McGee said in his introductory news conference. "I am excited about the personnel we have and the commitment I saw."

At the end of spring practice, McGee acknowledged that he was somewhat taken aback by his new team's overall athleticism and talent level.

"I learned they have a great attitude and are really committed to doing things well," McGee said. "They want to do things the right way. They want to learn how to play the game at a certain level. I also learned we have a lot of good players on our team — more than most people think we have. I was surprised.

"When you read about a team that hasn't had a winning season in a while, you think you're going into a situation where you've got to go and recruit players, but once we got going, we've got a lot of really good players on our team."

It all starts with Jonathan Perry, a gifted dual-threat quarterback who accounted for 2,336 yards of total offense last season while completing 58.0 percent of his passes for 2,042 yards and 10 touchdowns with eight interceptions.

Perry adapted quickly to the new offense McGee installed, which emphasizes giving the quarterback plenty of responsibility in an aggressive, attacking style like the one McGee had at Arkansas with quarterbacks Ryan Mallett and Tyler Wilson. McGee liked what he saw from Perry in the spring.

"He's a smart kid," McGee said. "He understands football and understands concepts. He doesn't just try and memorize plays and that's important. He's able to get in the huddle and command the huddle. I think he did a really good job learning, developing as a leader and as the quarterback of this team."

Perry is more than ready to assume the leadership mantle, especially making his voice heard. "One thing I had to work on was the vocal part of being a leader," he said. "I think the guys know I will do anything to make the play or win the game, but becoming a vocal leader is something I wanted to get better at."

Perry probably won't have to yell much at a deep and talented bunch of receivers, which includes Jackie Williams, Patrick Hearn, Nick Adams and Jamarcus Nelson. Williams led the team with 58 receptions for 607 yards last season and is a dangerous punt return man. Nelson is a deep threat, averaging 21.1 yards per catch in 2011 with a team-leading four touchdown catches.

While McGee knew what kind of receivers he had on hand, he discovered that he has some depth at running back too, something Perry noted. "We have running backs like Dontavius (Jackson), Bashr (Coles) and Greg (Franklin) that all run downhill," Perry said. "It's important to have good running backs in a spread formation. We have a great receiving corps, which makes getting them the ball a lot easier."

The biggest question mark on the Blazers' offense is the line. Senior tackle Chris Hubbard (6-4, 285 pounds) is the only returning starter from last season's accomplished group that was one of the team's strengths.

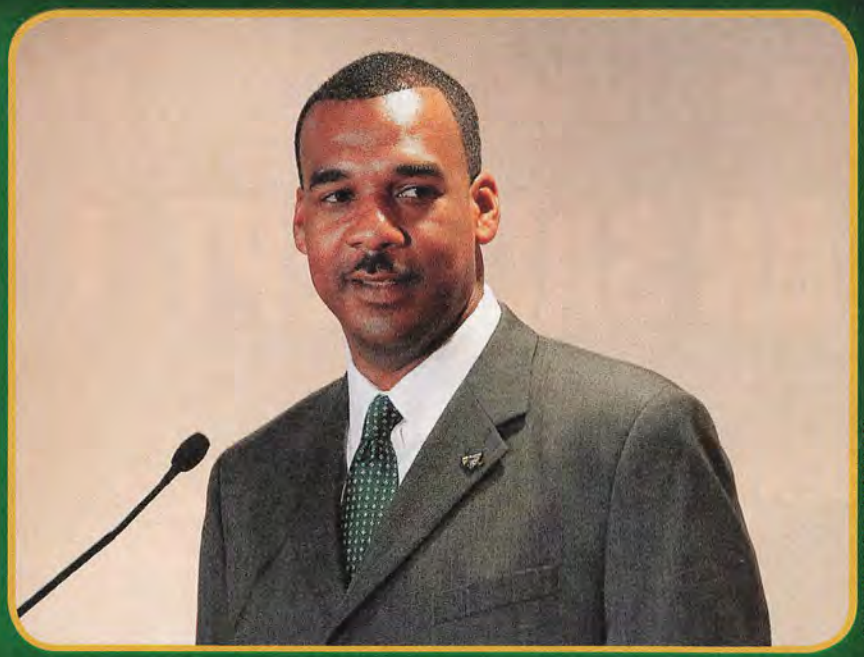

Photo by Marvin Gentry-US PRESSWIRE

UAB head coach Garrick McGee

In an effort to improve the offensive line, McGee moved 6-6, 275-pound senior Cody Payne from the defensive line to quick guard. "Cody Payne moving from defensive tackle to offensive line is really going to help us in that area," McGee said. "I think he's one of the more athletic offensive linemen we have."

On defense, linebacker is the obvious strength thanks to the presence of senior Marvin Burdette, who last season had 92 tackles, including 13 for losses. He has more than 200 tackles in his career.

Burdette shrugs off his ability to get to the ball. "I go out there and I play my heart out and I'm just hungry for that ball and if the tackles add up, they add up," he said.

One of the biggest surprises of the spring for the Blazers was the play of the defensive line, featuring 6-5, 265-pound tackle Connor Boyette, who had 31 tackles and three for losses last year, and 6-4, 258-pound end Diaheem Watkins. In three spring scrimmages, including the spring game, the Blazers had 28 sacks, with 26 of those credited to defensive linemen. In 12 games last season, UAB had eight sacks with only three credited to defensive linemen.

It's just the kind of aggressive play that McGee expects from his defense. "On defense, our philosophy will involve attacking," the coach said. "When you have spent your career coaching quarterbacks, you understand what it's like to have the defense come after you and push your quarterback off of his set points. The defense keeps the quarterback guessing and makes him see one thing but then gives him something else. We are going to play an aggressive style of defense, and we won't just stand back and take what the offense gives us. We are going to go after people."

The main concern on defense is the secondary, which has only one experienced cornerback in Cornelius Richards and question marks at safety. McGee hopes shifting some players around will help the situation.

"We did make a few position changes, which made us faster as a unit," McGee said. "It's a process, but we have some really good coaches back there, so I think we will be fine."

The Blazers' kicking game appears to be solid thanks to sophomore placekicker Ty Long, who made 16 of 19 field goal attempts with a long of 49 yards, and 24 of 25 PATs en route to being named a Freshman All-American and making the All-Conference USA Freshman Team. Sophomore Hunter Mullins is expected to take over as punter with the departure of Trey Ragland.

Photo by Marvin Gentry-US PRESSWIRE

Quarterback Jonathan Perry

McGee hopes to add some depth from his first recruiting class. The Blazers signed 18 players, addressing needs in the secondary and on the offensive line.

"You normally carry 12 or 13 offensive linemen on scholarship," McGee said. "I think we have six or seven (currently in the program), so we had to get that number right so we can practice with a first-team offense, a second-team offense and a scout-team offense. We also needed depth at defensive back, and I think we got three really good corners with good size."

The best of the newcomers figures to be cornerback Kelton Brackett from Mobile, wide receiver-defensive back Nyiakki Height from Marietta, Ga., free safety Cortez Webb, a junior college transfer who enrolled in January from Butler County Community College in Wichita, Kansas, and junior college cornerback D'Andre Green, who earned first-team All-Coast Conference honors in 2011 at Hartnell College in Salinas, Calif., where he had four interceptions and the longest interception return (99 yards) in school history last fall.

UAB also signed 6-4, 215-pound quarterback Josh Greer from Arlington, Texas. He was the first player McGee offered a scholarship and he enrolled in January so he could participate in spring drills. He threw for 2,691 yards and 24 touchdowns as a high school senior.

McGee is looking for his team to become mentally tougher heading into the season against a demanding schedule that includes non-conference road games at South Carolina and Ohio State in back-to-back weeks in September.

"We have to develop a mindset that when things get tough, that's when you have to push forward because nearly every game is decided in the fourth quarter," McGee said. "In the first quarter, everybody is fresh and playing their best. But late in the game when everyone is tired, the teams that win are the teams that are able to overcome.

"I think our spring went well and we started to develop a plan to go about our business. I think we are capable of developing into a good team."

Rubin E. Grant is a freelance writer in Birmingham.

CROWE, GAMECOCKS HAVE BUILT THE BRAND

BY LYN SCARBROUGH

Brand awareness.

Every successful product has it — and it's not easy to get.

When Jack Crowe came to Jacksonville as head coach in 2000, football was his product, but the product needed some work.

The football Gamecocks weren't unknown. They had been contenders in the Gulf South Conference and then the Southland Conference for a long time — but not in a long time.

There had been 15 conference titles, but the 1992 national championship season was a faded memory. The 1999 team won two games. There was just one win in 1997 and 1996. That's what Crowe inherited.

It didn't take long to change things. The win total doubled in the first season. In 2003, when the Gamecocks joined the Ohio Valley Conference, they won eight games. The next three seasons brought conference titles.

Jacksonville State became annual national championship contenders and took on all-comers. Their few defeats included games at Kansas, Mississippi State and Georgia Tech. They led Florida State in Tallahassee in 2009 with just 35 seconds remaining before losing. Then, the 2010 season opener brought one of the program's greatest victories — a win in Oxford against Ole Miss of the Southeastern Conference.

It's not the same Jacksonville State anymore.

The week following this year's spring game, Crowe sat on the deck overlooking Burgess-Snow Field, reflecting on the Gamecocks' football evolution.

"We changed the perception of Jacksonville State football," he said. "We went from 'can we win' to 'we expect to win.' We have a national brand now.

"How did it happen? It starts with leadership from the Board of Trustees and then goes throughout our program. We've pushed ourselves to a higher competitive level."

Some might think that this season the Gamecocks have taken that "competitive" thing too far. They open the year on Sept. 1 in Fayetteville against Arkansas, a team where Crowe was head coach in the early 1990s. They close the season on Nov. 17 against Florida in Gainesville.

"We think that we're playing the toughest schedule in Jacksonville State history and possibly in OVC history," Crowe said. "But, you only grow when you challenge yourself. We're trying to raise our position and profile and, of course, bring more money into our program."

A significant contributor will be a player already familiar with those SEC venues. Senior tailback Washaun Ealey has led his team in rushing three times ... but only once at Jacksonville. Before transferring, he played for the Georgia Bulldogs, where he rushed for over 1,500 yards and scored 14 touchdowns in two seasons. Last year, he ran for 1,082 yards and had eight scores for Jacksonville.

Ealey understands his role.

"Even though I've only been here two seasons, I have to accept that senior leadership role," he said. "We have to accept that responsibility. We all need to lead by example."

When Ealey came to Jacksonville, he knew that some would criticize the move and question his toughness. He had something to prove.

"I didn't want fans to think that I was running from competition," he said. "I just wanted to play more, help the team more. Coach Crowe and the people here gave me that opportunity, the chance to be a premiere back. They all welcomed me with open arms; we became friends instantly."

Crowe is optimistic about the 2012 season.

"I was pleased with things in spring practice, finding and developing young players," Crowe said. "We were set back a little by having some veteran players miss time due to injury. But, there were inspiring things."

One of those was the play of redshirt sophomore quarterback Steven Coates. Playing due to injuries to returnees Marquez Ivory and Cody Blanchard, he completed 16 of 19 passes for 216 yards and three touchdowns in the spring game.

"He is such a confident young man," Crowe said. "He was exciting to watch. It lets us know that if we have major injuries again, we have another solid player in the mix.

"We're blessed to return two veteran quarterbacks. We think that our offense has enough players back to be credible from the start. But, on defense, we'll have to grow into what we'll be. We only have four seniors on that side of the ball. We're rebuilding. Our no-name defense will have to earn it on the field."

That's where Ealey and the offense come in.

"We can get our job done," he said confidently. "I can see the full field, outsmart defenders and make them miss. We all can use our strengths to our advantage. I just want to get better and help my teammates to play hard.

"I just love to win. When we lose, I can't sleep."

When Ealey can't sleep, he watches ESPN's SportsCenter, with somewhat of a selfish motive.

"I'm majoring in Communications," he said. "I can see myself being an announcer on SportsCenter after I've played in the league (NFL). In high school, we did a TV show about stuff around the school, but in this curriculum, I'll have a chance to work in front of the camera."

If Crowe and Ealey have their way, the star tailback may be unable to sleep on Saturday night, but not because of losing. If the Gamecocks can pull another SEC upset, ESPN's Top 10 Plays of the Day just might include a dramatic Ealey touchdown.

"That would be so great," he said. "My mom, my brothers, all of them would call to make sure that I was recording it. It's something you would always want to remember."

That would be something fans of the "new brand" Gamecocks would never forget.

Photo by Mike Zarrilli/Getty Images

Head coach Jack Crowe

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2012 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

9/1 • @ Arkansas
9/8 • Chattanooga
9/22 • @ Eastern Kentucky
9/29 • Southeast Missouri State
10/6 • @ at Tennessee Tech
10/13 • @ Eastern Illinois
10/20 • Tennessee State
10/27 • Murray State (HC)
11/3 • @ UT Martin
11/10 • Austin Peay
11/17 • @ Florida
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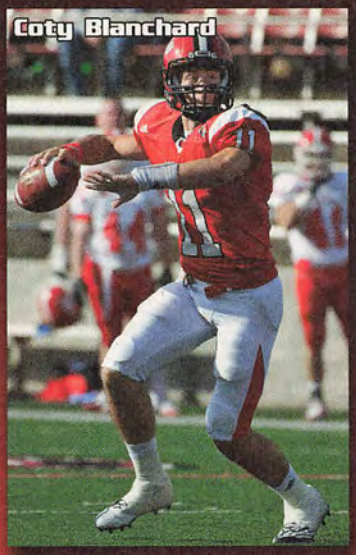
Coty Blanchard

2012 GAMECOCK FOOTBALL

9/1 • at Arkansas
9/8 • Chattanooga
9/22 • at Eastern Kentucky
9/29 • Southeast Missouri State
10/6 • at Tennessee Tech
10/13 • at Eastern Illinois
10/20 • Tennessee State
10/27 • Murray State (HC)
11/3 • at UT Martin
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11/17 • at Florida

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FOR SULLIVAN, SAMFORD — THIS COULD BE THE TIME

BY CARY ESTES

Pat Sullivan became the head coach of the Samford Bulldogs in 2007. One year later, the school made the move to the Southern Conference, and Sullivan has felt like his program has been playing catch-up ever since.

"We really weren't ready to do that when we did it," Sullivan said of joining the SoCon. "It's just been a constant building process these last four years. Getting the players here, getting the facilities upgraded, building up everybody's confidence that we can compete in this league. All those things had to be done, and that took some time."

But Sullivan believes the time is now for the Bulldogs to make that next step from merely being competitive in the Southern Conference to being a contender. Samford went 6-5 last season, 4-4 in conference play. A total of 16 starters return from that team, including several players who have been regulars in the lineup since they were freshmen.

"A lot of these guys had to come in and play as freshmen when they weren't ready to play. But we bit that bullet and played them," Sullivan said. "I'm excited about where we are. Each year, we keep getting better and better."

The key, Sullivan said, has been targeting recruits who are truly interested in playing at Samford, instead of spending a lot of time trying to chase down players mulling multiple scholarship offers. Last season, for example, Sullivan said Samford brought in a total of 20 players on recruiting visits, and ended up signing 17 of them.

"We've had a good success ratio with our recruiting," Sullivan said. "Our coaches have done a great job of evaluating players and making sure they're the right kind of kids who want to go to Samford. And then once they get here on their visit, they find out this is one heck of a place."

Sullivan also believes the Bulldogs play in one heck of a conference. He calls the SoCon the Southeastern Conference of the Football Championship Subdivision (Division I-AA), and points to Nov. 19 of last season as proof of the league's quality. On that day, four SoCon teams went on the road to play teams from the SEC. And though all four returned home with a loss, each of the games was close into the second half.

- Citadel trailed South Carolina, 20-13, at halftime.
- Furman led Florida, 22-7, in the second quarter and trailed, 37-32, to start the fourth quarter.
- Georgia Southern scored the most points (21) and gained the most yards (302) allowed all season by eventual national champion Alabama.
- And Sullivan's Bulldogs trailed Auburn by a single point well into the third quarter.

In addition, earlier in the season, Wofford nearly upset Clemson before falling, 35-27.

"This is really a quality, quality league with a lot of balance," Sullivan said. "You have to be at your best every week to have a chance."

That is why Sullivan points with pride to the Bulldogs' fifth-place finish in the Southern Conference last season, placing them exactly in the middle of the nine-team league. It obviously is not where he wants the team to finish in the long-term, but he said it is a good start for a team that has been in the conference for only four years.

"For us to be in the middle-to-upper part of the conference right now speaks volumes for what these players and coaches have been able to do." Sullivan said. "We've beaten everybody in the league except Appalachian State. We've beaten some people we weren't supposed to beat and had a chance to win a few more."

Sullivan said this year's team "has the best skill players from top to bottom that we've ever had." They are led on offense by junior running back Fabian Truss, who rushed for 847 yards and seven touchdowns in 10 games last season and led the Southern Conference in all-purpose yards with 177.4 per game.

The Bulldogs do have a major question mark at quarterback, where they must replace four-year starter Dustin Taliaferro. Sullivan said three players are battling for the starting spot: Memphis transfer Andy Summerlin, junior Ben Neill and redshirt freshman Carson Barnett.

Defensively, the Bulldogs return all three of their starting linebackers, as well as fifth-year defensive linemen Nick Williams and Jeremy Towns, both of whom have gained more than 50 pounds during their time at Samford.

"They came in here, worked hard and got bigger, and now they're probably as key to our football team as anybody is," Sullivan said. "Those two kind of epitomize our program and how we have to do it in order to be successful."

Photo by John Reed-US PRESSWIRE

Pat Sullivan

RANKING

52 VANDERBILT | COMMODORES

SEC rank: 12 Record: 6-7 SEC record: 2-6 (T-4th, East) Stadium: Vanderbilt Stadium (39,773)

Photo by RD MOORE

"I really feel like the next step we have to take as a program is going to be a more difficult step."
— Coach James Franklin

COMMODORES at a GLANCE

COACH: James Franklin — At Vanderbilt and overall: 6-7, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Donovan
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bob Shoop

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1923 (Southern Conference)
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 9 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jordan Rodgers, RB Zac Stacy, WR Jordan Matthews, WR Chris Boyd, DT Rob Lohr, LB Chase Garnham, LB Archibald Barnes, CB Trey Wilson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Commodores will pound the ball early as the passing game develops. Stacy is the school's single-season rushing leader; Warren Norman is hopeful for a big comeback year after knee injuries held him out in 2011. Speedy four-star recruit Brian Kimbrow also could make an impact. Most of the defensive line returns, headed by Lohr.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Depth at offensive line is again a major concern. Four starters return, but one — LG Ryan Seymour — missed all of spring drills. Garnham has big shoes to fill at middle linebacker with the departure of Chris Marve. Two starters are gone from a secondary that picked off 19 passes in 2011.

OFFENSE

The starting quarterback job belongs to Jordan Rodgers unless he trips up mightily in fall camp and Wyoming transfer Austyn Carta-Samuels takes huge strides in learning the offense.

Senior running back Zac Stacy returns after setting the school's single-season rushing record. He'll be joined in the backfield by former SEC Freshman of the Year Warren Norman (who sat out 2011 due to a knee injury), Jerron Seymour and Wesley Tate — who might move back to slot receiver depending on depth concerns.

Touted freshman Brian Kimbrow also figures to compete for carries.

Wesley Johnson, Josh Jelesky, Andrew Bridges and Ryan Seymour return on the line. Sophomore Spencer Pulley had a solid spring at center and will replace Logan Stewart, who was kicked off the team.

Wide receivers Jordan Matthews and Chris Boyd want to build off breakout 2011 seasons. Jonathan Krause is looking to improve his durability and consistency. Redshirt freshman and slot receiver Josh Grady could be a promising option at Wildcat, if the spring was any indication.

Redshirt freshman Steven Scheu and sophomore Dillon van der Wal are expected to challenge sixth-year senior Austin Monahan at tight end. After an impressive spring, redshirt freshman Kris Kentera could dethrone Fitz Lassing at H-back.

DEFENSE

Four starters are gone from a unit that ranked 18th in the nation in total defense.

Defensive tackle Rob Lohr (11.5 tackles for loss, five sacks) headlines a line with three returning starters. Defensive end Walker May could provide the explosiveness that Tim Fugger showed on his way to a team-leading eight sacks.

Linebacker Chris Marve, the SEC's leading tackler over the last four years, is gone. Junior Chase Garnham moves from the outside to replace Marve in the middle, and Archibald Barnes returns as the team's top returning tackler. Tristan Strong is expected to return after a season-ending leg injury last year. Mid-year freshman enrollee Darreon Herring delivered several big hits during the spring and is a candidate to play right away.

Starting cornerback Trey Wilson and starting strong safety Javon Marshall return. The speedy Wilson is the most proven after intercepting three passes and scoring two touchdowns in 2011.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The starting kicking job is up for grabs after Carey Spear and Ryan Fowler were inconsistent last year. The duo combined to make 8 of 14 field-goal attempts last year but didn't convert beyond 40 yards.

Two-year starter Richard Kent returns to handle the punting duties. Andre Hal will handle kickoff returns, and wide receiver Jonathan Krause will receive punts.

OVERVIEW

Finishing the close games is the focus in James Franklin's second year. The Commodores lost four SEC games by a combined 19 points. Defense figures to be the backbone again, despite losing four huge playmakers. If the passing game evolves to balance out a strong backfield, Vanderbilt will be bowling for two straight years for the first time in school history.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Josh Grady: The former quarterback poses a huge threat in the Wildcat formation. Grady (6-0, 185) redshirted in 2011 but was the third-string QB and headed up the scout team offense. In the spring game, he totaled 94 yards on five direct snaps, throwing and running for a TD.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	**Jordan Rodgers***	6-1	205	Sr.
RB	2	**Zac Stacy***	5-9	210	Sr.
HB	38	**Fitz Lassing***	6-3	240	Jr.
WR	87	**Jordan Matthews***	6-3	205	Jr.
WR	80	**Chris Boyd***	6-4	205	So.
TE	86	Austin Monahan	6-6	252	Sr.
LT	67	**Wesley Johnson***	6-5	290	Jr.
LG	62	**Ryan Seymour***	6-5	305	Sr.
C	77	Spencer Pulley	6-4	285	So.
RG	69	**Josh Jelesky***	6-5	290	Sr.
RT	52	**Andrew Bridges***	6-6	275	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	90	**Walker May***	6-5	245	Jr.
DT	58	**Colt Nichter***	6-2	285	Sr.
DT	84	**Rob Lohr***	6-4	290	Sr.
DE	98	Johnell Thomas	6-0	250	Sr.
LB	15	**Archibald Barnes***	6-4	232	Sr.
LB	36	**Chase Garnham***	6-3	234	Jr.
LB	28	Karl Butler	6-1	210	Jr.
CB	8	**Trey Wilson***	5-11	192	Sr.
CB	23	Andre Hal	6-0	184	Jr.
SS	31	**Javon Marshall***	5-10	195	Jr.
FS	1	Kenny Ladler	6-1	200	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	48	**Ryan Fowler***	5-10	175	Sr.
P	94	**Richard Kent***	6-2	198	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 8	at Northwestern
Sept. 15	PRESBYTERIAN
Sept. 22	at Georgia
Oct. 6	at Missouri
Oct. 13	FLORIDA
Oct. 20	AUBURN
Oct. 27	MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 3	at Kentucky
Nov. 10	at Ole Miss
Nov. 17	TENNESSEE
Nov. 24	at Wake Forest

2011 RESULTS

W	ELON	45-14
W	CONNECTICUT	24-21
W	OLE MISS	30-7
L	at South Carolina	3-21
L	at Alabama	0-34
L	GEORGIA	28-33
W	ARMY	44-21
L	ARKANSAS	28-31
L	at Florida	21-26
W	KENTUCKY	38-8
L	at Tennessee (OT)	21-27
W	at Wake Forest	41-7
	Liberty Bowl	
L	vs. Cincinnati	24-31

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.7	61
Rushing	164.5	47
Passing	174.6	97
Total	339.1	98
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.6	29
Rushing	130.5	36
Passing	192.2	18
Total	322.8	18
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

60 OLE MISS | REBELS

SEC rank: 13 Record: 2-10 SEC record: 0-8 (6th, West) Stadium: Vaught-Hemingway (60,580)

Photo by RD MOORE

"Five or six guys I feel good about, that they could really help us win in the SEC."
— Coordinator Dave Wommack, on his defense

REBELS at a GLANCE

COACH: Hugh Freeze — At Ole Miss: 1st year
OVERALL: 30-7, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Dan Werner, Matt Luke
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Dave Wommack, Wesley McGriff

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1963
LAST BOWL: 2009, Cotton
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Jeff Scott, WR Donte Moncrief, WR Ja-Mes Logan, OG Aaron Morris, DE C.J. Johnson, LB Mike Marry, CB Wesley Pendleton, SS Charles Sawyer

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Freeze inherits a very young roster, but one that saw a lot of guys get experience last season. There are potential playmakers all over the offense, and the defense was recruited to play fast and cover multiple receivers.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There is a reason why Ole Miss has lost 15 straight in the SEC: the Rebels lack depth at pretty much every position and have an overall talent gap between themselves and the rest of the league. How much difference can a new coaching staff make?

OFFENSE

Step No. 1 is determining a quarterback between West Virginia transfer Barry Brunetti and midyear junior college enrollee Bo Wallace.

Brunetti has an edge in experience, having started the first and last games of the 2011 season. But Wallace redshirted under coach Hugh Freeze at Arkansas State in 2010. They'll enter fall camp tied.

Running back Jeff Scott was a bit of a surprise as a sophomore, running for a team-high 529 yards and six touchdowns in 10 games. But he's just 5-7, 175 and not suited for the pounding an every-down back takes.

Freshman I'Tavius Mathers is expected to make an instant impact.

Sophomore Donte Moncrief leads a fairly deep and talented receiver group. He and Ja-Mes Logan provide vertical threats, while Randall Mackey, Korvic Neat and Jamal Mosley can all attack the middle of the field.

The Rebels have rebuilding to do up front and are stitching the line together. Junior college transfer Pierce Burton brings a needed aggressiveness to right tackle, and left guard Aaron Morris is an emerging presence.

DEFENSE

Co-defensive coordinator Dave Wommack is trying to turn around a group that gave up 419.3 yards per game last season. He's keeping the 4-2-5 formation, but made it evident during spring practice that he's far more blitz-happy than his predecessor.

Defensive ends C.J. Johnson and Channing Ward, the top in-state prospects in each of the past two seasons, should benefit from Wommack's approach. Defensive tackle Bryon Bennett is solid.

Linebacker Mike Marry returns after making a team-high 81 tackles as a sophomore; he's lost weight and should be better suited to play in pass coverage. Brishen Mathews will get the first shot at the safety/linebacker hybrid position; a back injury ruined his 2011 season.

Safety Charles Sawyer had a team-high four interceptions and can play corner in a pinch. That won't be necessary if Nickolas Brassell is academically eligible and Wesley Pendleton follows up on his spring (when he was named defensive MVP).

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Tyler Campbell and kicker Bryson Rose are seniors who have been in their positions multiple seasons and established themselves among the SEC's best. Andrew Ritter will handle kickoffs.

Scott and Tobias Singleton are big-play threats in the return game. Scott averaged 17.2 yards per punt return, second in the NCAA if he met the minimum number of returns; Singleton was sixth in the SEC in kickoff returns at 24.6 yards a clip.

OVERVIEW

Freeze is known for quick turnarounds everywhere he's been, but that was high school, NAIA and the Sun Belt. This is the SEC, and progress likely will be measured slowly. Still, there's some talent on the roster. If that talent is put in the right places and plays with confidence, the Rebels could double their win total from 2011 — and end that SEC win drought.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Channing Ward: A four-star prospect from in-state Aberdeen High School, Ward was unquestionably the top player in the Rebels' class of 2012. He won't be handed the starting job at end, but at 6-4, 250 has a college-ready body.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	Barry Brunetti	6-0	215	Jr.
RB	**3**	**Jeff Scott***	**5-7**	**175**	**Jr.**
WR	**12**	**Donte Moncrief***	**6-2**	**214**	**So.**
WR	85	Ja-Mes Logan	6-2	190	Jr.
WR	**1**	**Randall Mackey***	**5-11**	**195**	**Sr.**
TE	**17**	**Jamal Mosley***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
LT	70	Emmanuel McCray	6-5	319	Jr.
LG	72	Aaron Morris	6-5	325	So.
C	**56**	**Evan Swindall***	**6-2**	**300**	**Jr.**
RG	76	A.J. Hawkins	6-3	315	Sr.
RT	71	Pierce Burton	6-7	290	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	10	C.J. Johnson	6-1	231	So.
DT	**95**	**Bryon Bennett***	**6-2**	**294**	**So.**
DT	93	Uriah Grant	6-0	287	Sr.
DE	N/A	Channing Ward	6-4	250	Fr.
LB	**52**	**Mike Marry***	**6-2**	**248**	**Jr.**
LB	**20**	**Aaron Garbutt***	**6-2**	**200**	**Sr.**
S/LB	13	Brishen Mathews	5-11	200	Jr.
CB	**6**	**Wesley Pendleton***	**5-11**	**180**	**Sr.**
CB	**2**	**Nickolas Brassell***	**6-0**	**172**	**So.**
SS	**3**	**Charles Sawyer***	**5-11**	**175**	**Jr.**
FS	8	Chief Brown	6-0	193	Fr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**81**	**Bryson Rose***	**5-11**	**202**	**Sr.**
P	**97**	**Tyler Campbell***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 8	UTEP
Sept. 15	TEXAS
Sept. 22	at Tulane
Sept. 29	at Alabama
Oct. 6	TEXAS A&M
Oct. 13	AUBURN
Oct. 27	at Arkansas
Nov. 3	at Georgia
Nov. 10	VANDERBILT
Nov. 17	at LSU
Nov. 24	MISSISSIPPI STATE

2011 RESULTS

L	BYU	13-14
W	Southern Illinois	42-24
L	at Vanderbilt	7-30
L	Georgia	13-27
W	at Fresno State	38-28
L	Alabama	7-52
L	Arkansas	24-29
L	at Auburn	23-41
L	at Kentucky	13-30
L	Louisiana Tech	7-27
L	LSU	3-52
L	at Mississippi State	3-31

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.1	116
Rushing	129.6	83
Passing	151.7	107
Total	281.3	114
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	32.1	96
Rushing	224.9	112
Passing	194.4	22
Total	419.3	90
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-8	-0.67	100

RANKING

61 KENTUCKY | WILDCATS

SEC rank: 14 Record: 5-7 SEC record: 2-6 (T-4th, East) Stadium: Commonwealth Stadium (67,942)

Photo by Mark Zerof-US PRESSWIRE

"Don't give up on this football team. We'll battle; we'll fight; we'll scratch; we'll claw."
— Joker Phillps, on his message to fans

WILDCATS at a GLANCE

COACH: Joker Phillips — At Kentucky and overall: 11-14, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Randy Sanders
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rick Minter

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1976, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010, BBVA Compass
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Maxwell Smith, WR La'Rod King, WR Demarco Robinson, OL Larry Warford, DT Mister Cobble, DT Donte Rumph, LB Alvin Dupree, S Martavius Neloms

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Kentucky may have found potential playmakers on offense and in the return game. There is depth and versatility at key positions like tight end and running back. The defensive line returns most of its top players, which may give the rest of the youthful defense time to grow into new roles.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Injuries on the offensive line or in the secondary could spell doom. The Cats will rely on freshmen and redshirt freshmen to play key roles, which doesn't always work out well in the SEC. A difficult schedule could make all of the above even worse.

OFFENSE

A season ago, UK had to replace its starting quarterback, tailback and top two receivers. That lack of experience showed in the statistics, with the Cats finishing last in the SEC in nearly every statistical category.

So there's no place to go but up.

Coach Joker Phillips hopes his poor offense will improve because he brings back nearly every playmaker from last season and is banking on the development of some of last year's freshmen like quarterback Maxwell Smith (819 yards, four touchdowns), Demarco Robinson and Daryl Collins.

The offense is still relying mostly on youth. UK returns just one key receiver, senior La'Rod King, who caught 40 passes and amassed 598 yards receiving. King finished last season with seven scores and averaged 14.9 yards per catch.

Kentucky's tailbacks and tight ends could be assets. Both positions have depth and versatility.

While potential playmakers litter the roster this season, they'll have to make those plays behind a relatively inexperienced line, which lost three starters and has very little depth.

DEFENSE

Kentucky is going to have to find a way to replace six starters who flourished under coordinator Rick Minter's new ever-changing system (combo 3-4, 4-3). UK lost the SEC's top two tacklers in Danny Trevathan and Winston Guy, as well as its two starting corners and veteran linebackers Ronnie Sneed and Ridge Wilson.

Kentucky isn't without leadership and star potential, though.

Senior defensive end Martavius Neloms has become a true leader and is the team's leading returning tackler, with 71 last season (third on the team). Safety Mikie Benton (28 tackles) led the team in pass breakups with seven.

Phillips pointed to other potential playmakers after spring, including linemen like Mister Cobble and Donte Rumph, as well as emerging linebackers Avery Williamson and Alvin Dupree, before adding that for the most part "the rest of the defense needs to bring their play up."

On the corners, UK needs big things from senior Cartier Rice and redshirt freshman Marcus Caffey, a converted running back.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Craig McIntosh has extended his range to 50-plus yards. He made 12 of 14 field-goal attempts last season. But after the spring, UK was still looking for a punter and likely will go with a true freshman.

The return game could get a boost from sophomore receiver Demarco Robinson. A boost won't be difficult to come by since the return game failed to yield a touchdown and finished at the bottom of the SEC, averaging a meager 1.8 yards per punt return.

OVERVIEW

While some of last year's top players return, the Cats are still going to be relying on a young group to get wins in the unforgiving SEC. The schedule isn't going to help things either, with games against eight teams that played in bowl games last season, so sneaking into the postseason would be a nice accomplishment for UK.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Patrick Towles: Towles (6-5, 232) led in-state power Highlands to a 38-1 record as a starter and three straight state titles, passing for 7,429 yards and 73 TDs in his career, also running for 1,718 yards and 38 scores. He is the grandson of Hall of Fame pitcher Jim Bunning.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	Maxwell Smith	6-4	230	So.
RB	**26**	**CoShik Williams***	**5-9**	**184**	**Sr.**
RB	21	Josh Clemons	5-10	205	So.
WR	**16**	**La'Rod King***	**6-4**	**211**	**Sr.**
WR	9	Demarco Robinson	5-10	157	So.
TE	80	Ronnie Shields	6-5	241	So.
LT	77	Darrian Miller	6-5	299	So.
LG	75	Zach West	6-4	301	Fr.
C	**69**	**Matt Smith***	**6-4**	**291**	**Sr.**
RG	**67**	**Larry Warford***	**6-3**	**333**	**Sr.**
RT	79	Kevin Mitchell	6-6	291	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**96**	**Collins Ukwu***	**6-5**	**258**	**Sr.**
DT	**99**	**Donte Rumph***	**6-3**	**315**	**Jr.**
DT	**97**	**Mister Cobble***	**6-0**	**331**	**Jr.**
DE	94	Taylor Wyndham	6-4	243	Sr.
LB	2	Alvin Dupree	6-4	247	So.
LB	40	Avery Williamson	6-1	245	Jr.
LB	54	Malcolm McDuffen	6-3	216	So.
CB	35	Cartier Rice	5-10	187	Sr.
CB	15	Marcus Caffey	5-11	201	Fr.
S	**31**	**Mikie Benton***	**5-11**	**195**	**Sr.**
S	**1**	**Martavius Neloms***	**6-1**	**188**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**93**	**Craig McIntosh***	**6-0**	**194**	**Sr.**
P	88	Joe Mansour	6-2	191	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Louisville
Sept. 8	KENT STATE
Sept. 15	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 22	at Florida
Sept. 29	SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 6	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 13	at Arkansas
Oct. 20	GEORGIA
Oct. 27	at Missouri
Nov. 3	VANDERBILT
Nov. 17	SAMFORD
Nov. 24	at Tennessee

2011 RESULTS

W	at Western Kentucky	14-3
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	27-13
L	LOUISVILLE	17-24
L	FLORIDA	10-48
L	at LSU	7-35
L	at South Carolina	3-54
W	JACKSONVILLE STATE	38-14
L	MISSISSIPPI STATE	16-28
W	OLE MISS	30-13
L	at Vanderbilt	8-38
L	at Georgia	10-19
W	TENNESSEE	10-7

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	15.8	117
Rushing	124.2	90
Passing	135.6	114
Total	259.8	118
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.7	53
Rushing	183.2	87
Passing	193.8	21
Total	377.0	58
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+1	+0.08	49

PICKING **THE BIG TEN**

While Buckeyes Build, Big Blue is Back on Top

You have to feel for Michigan. Entering a season in which most see the maize and blue as the Big Ten's team to beat, that darn school due south somehow managed to steal most of the offseason headlines.

The conference is abuzz over the hiring of Urban Meyer, whose mission is to clean up and rebuild Ohio State into a perennial powerhouse.

No one questions whether Meyer can do it, or even that he will do it; it's just a matter of how long it will take. Perhaps Meyer could steal a few pointers from his new archrival, Brady Hoke, who turned Michigan's mess into a BCS qualifier in just one season.

Outsiders may have marveled at Hoke's work, but not Big Ten coaches.

"I've been part of this conference for 20 years," Iowa's Kirk Ferentz told *Lindy's*, "and one constant is that you can never count Michigan or Ohio State out for long."

The Wolverines' 1-2 punch of quarterback Denard Robinson and running back Fitzgerald Toussaint leads a roster full of promise.

The school's season-opener against Alabama will serve as an indicator for whether Hoke's squad is ready to take the next step, but the more important test will come weeks later when the Wolverines entertain in-state rival (and leading conference challenger) Michigan State.

In Columbus, Meyer has few pieces to play with in year one. The offensive line must be reshaped to fit his wide-open approach, and Braxton Miller must become more consistent under center. On defense, the secondary is deep but inexperienced.

Again, no one doubts that the man who won two national titles while at Florida is up to the challenge.

"What he's done speaks for itself," says Minnesota's Jerry Kill. "(His arrival) only makes our conference tougher."

No matter how well the Buckeyes fare, it's kind of a lost season; the team is ineligible for postseason play, including the Big Ten title game in Indianapolis. That leaves the door open for Wisconsin to return to Lucas Oil Stadium.

First, the Badgers must replace three offensive linemen and retool the second-

Big Ten Picks

LEGENDS	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Michigan	Brady Hoke was the right man at the right time to lead Michigan.	The regular season begins with Alabama and ends at Ohio State.	Oh, forget the bad news; we're in love with the Wolverines!
2. Michigan State	MSU lost Jerel Worthy and still has the best D in the Big Ten.	Filling holes on offense, specifically in the passing game, will not be easy.	The season will come down to the Oct. 20 trip to Ann Arbor — the way it should be.
3. Nebraska	Rex Burkhead, Taylor Martinez are a formidable pair on the ground.	The Cornhusker defense lost elite talent at each tier.	It will be another good season for the Huskers; not great, but good.
4. Northwestern	The passing game has the potential to rank among the conference's best.	Only one starter returns to a secondary that ranked last in passing yards allowed.	With Pat Fitzgerald at the helm, NU is always prepared to spoil someone's season.
5. Iowa	James Vandenberg and the passing game will be much better than what's expected.	A little house cleaning has left the cupboards a bit bare.	Kirk Ferentz is still one of the Big Ten's best coaches, no matter how things look in 2012.
6. Minnesota	The Minnesota Legislature approved a plan to allow the sale of beer on game days.	Gophers need something in the stands to distract fans from the action on the field.	Life could be worse (ok, not much).
LEADERS			
1. Ohio State	The Buckeyes replaced one legendary coach with another (Urban Meyer).	No matter how quickly Meyer cleans up Columbus, OSU is still ineligible for 2012.	Expect big steps for the Buckeyes in Year One of the Meyer era.
2. Wisconsin	As usual, the mammoth ground attack is reloaded and ready for more yards.	Transfer QB Danny O'Brien might not be Russell Wilson.	A return trip to Indianapolis is in the cards, but as a whole, UW will take a step back.
3. Penn State	There is plenty of talent on the roster; neither Michigan school is on the schedule.	Scandal still looms over University Park; the program could take years to heal.	The middle of the pack won't satisfy anxious Nittany Lions fans, but it will have to do.
4. Purdue	All-World DT Kawann Short skipped a handsome payday to return to West Lafayette.	The QB crop hardly lives up to the school's "Cradle" reputation.	An encouraging start will be crushed by the Boilermakers' deadly October schedule.
5. Illinois	The defensive front seven boasts several outstanding players.	New coach Tim Beckman watched four former Illini players get drafted in April.	Despite how things appear, Illinois is closer to the middle than the bottom.
6. Indiana	The Hoosiers could sweep their four non-conference opponents.	Last we checked, a team needs at least six wins to become bowl eligible.	Kevin Wilson refused to make bold predictions this offseason, for good reason.

ary, but that's hardly a worry. What fans are concerned about is quarterback; 2011 starter Russell Wilson transformed the grind-it-out offense into a multi-dimensional attack; 2012 transfer Danny O'Brien has yet to take a snap for the red and white.

The team Wisconsin beat in last year's title game is desperate to return.

"Having been there, it was even more exciting than we could have imagined," said Michigan State's Mark Dantonio.

His club will rely on an outstanding defense, highlighted by a fierce pass rush and a trio of linebackers — Max Bullough, Denicos Allen and Chris Norman — that rates among the best in the country. The Spartans must weather several tests before their showdown in Ann Arbor.

Can Nebraska and Penn State play spoiler? Only if both clubs' offensive and defensive lines come together in time. Same goes for Iowa and Northwestern — both schools are well coached, but lacking in firepower.

Of course, it's foolish to count out any squad in this conference.

"Any team can rise to the top in this conference," Dantonio said.

— Mike Beacom

Most Valuable Player

Denard Robinson
QB, Michigan

Offensive Player of the Year

Montee Ball
RB, Wisconsin

Defensive Player of the Year

Kawann Short
DT, Purdue

Newcomer of the Year

Kyle Prater
WR, Northwestern

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Nathan Scheelhaase	Illinois
Strongest Arm	James Vandenberg	Iowa
Best Scrambler	Denard Robinson	Michigan
Coolest in the Clutch	Denard Robinson	Michigan
Toughest to Bring Down	Le'Veon Bell	Michigan State
Best Hands	Jared Abbrederis	Wisconsin
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Roy Roundtree	Michigan
Best Pass Blocker	Chris McDonald	Michigan State
Best Run Blocker	Travis Frederick	Wisconsin
Best Pass Rusher	Denicos Allen	Michigan State
Best Cover Corner	Johnny Adams	Michigan State
Special Teams Demon	Ameer Abdullah	Nebraska

Lindy's 2012 ALL-BIG TEN Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Denard Robinson	Sr.	Michigan
RB	Montee Ball	Sr.	Wisconsin
RB	Fitzgerald Toussaint	Jr.	Michigan
WR	Jared Abbrederis	Jr.	Wisconsin
WR	Keenan Davis	Sr.	Iowa
TE	Jacob Pedersen	Jr.	Wisconsin
C	Travis Frederick	Jr.	Wisconsin
OL	Ricky Wagner	Sr.	Wisconsin
OL	Chris McDonald	Sr.	Michigan State
OL	Taylor Lewan	Jr.	Michigan
OL	Spencer Long	Jr.	Nebraska
K	Brett Maher	Sr.	Nebraska
AP	Ameer Abdullah	So.	Nebraska

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Braxton Miller	So.	Ohio State
RB	Rex Burkhead	Sr.	Nebraska
RB	Silas Redd	Jr.	Penn State
WR	Roy Roundtree	Sr.	Michigan
WR	Demetrius Fields	Sr.	Northwestern
TE	Jake Stoneburner	Sr.	Ohio State
C	James Ferentz	Sr.	Iowa
OL	Jack Mewhort	Jr.	Ohio State
OL	Brian Mulroe	Sr.	Northwestern
OL	Graham Pocic	Sr.	Illinois
OL	Fou Fonoti	Sr.	Michigan State
K	Drew Basil	Jr.	Ohio State
AP	Jared Abbrederis	Jr.	Wisconsin

OFFENSE - THIRD TEAM

QB	Taylor Martinez	Jr.	Nebraska
RB	Le'Veon Bell	Jr.	Michigan State
RB	Stephen Houston	Jr.	Indiana
WR	Antavian Edison	Sr.	Purdue
WR	Justin Brown	Sr.	Penn State
TE	Ben Cotton	Sr.	Nebraska
C	Matt Stankiewitch	Sr.	Penn State
OL	Ricky Barnum	Sr.	Michigan
OL	Will Matte	Sr.	Indiana
OL	Brandon Scherff	So.	Iowa
OL	Reid Fragel	Sr.	Ohio State
K	Anthony Fera	Jr.	Penn State
AP	Jordan Hall	Sr.	Ohio State

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Kawann Short	Sr.	Purdue
DL	William Gholston	Jr.	Michigan State
DL	John Simon	Sr.	Ohio State
DL	Johnathan Hankins	Jr.	Ohio State
LB	Gerald Hodges	Sr.	Penn State
LB	Chris Borland	Jr.	Wisconsin
LB	Jonathan Brown	Jr.	Illinois
DB	Johnny Adams	Sr.	Michigan State
DB	Micah Hyde	Sr.	Iowa
DB	C.J. Barnett	Jr.	Ohio State
DB	Ricardo Allen	Jr.	Purdue
P	Brett Maher	Sr.	Nebraska

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Jordan Hill	Sr.	Penn State
DL	Michael Buchanan	Sr.	Illinois
DL	Marcus Rush	So.	Michigan State
DL	Baker Steinkuhler	Sr.	Nebraska
LB	Mike Taylor	Sr.	Wisconsin
LB	James Morris	Jr.	Iowa
LB	Denicos Allen	Jr.	Michigan State
DB	Isaiah Lewis	Jr.	Michigan State
DB	Jordan Kovacs	Sr.	Michigan
DB	J.T. Floyd	Sr.	Michigan
DB	Travis Howard	Sr.	Ohio State
P	Anthony Fera	Jr.	Penn State

DEFENSE - THIRD TEAM

DL	Craig Roh	Sr.	Michigan
DL	Akeem Spence	Jr.	Illinois
DL	Steven Bigach	Sr.	Iowa
DL	Beau Allen	Jr.	Wisconsin
LB	Max Bullough	Jr.	Michigan State
LB	Ryan Shazier	So.	Ohio State
LB	Michael Mauti	Sr.	Penn State
DB	Daimion Stafford	Sr.	Nebraska
DB	Terry Hawthorne	Sr.	Illinois
DB	Ibraheim Campbell	So.	Northwestern
DB	Devin Smith	Sr.	Wisconsin
P	Cody Webster	Jr.	Purdue

THE **BIG** ONES

Aug. 31	
Boise State at Michigan State	Two national powerhouses, each breaking in a new QB.
Sept. 1	
Michigan vs. Alabama (Arlington, TX)	Just a little season-opener that will influence the national title chase.
Sept. 8	
Iowa State at Iowa	It took three overtimes to decide this intra-state affair last season.
Nebraska at UCLA	Bruins last faced a Big Ten foe in the regular season in 2004 (Illinois).
Sept. 15	
Boston College at Northwestern	QB Kain Colter did it all in beating BC last season.
Notre Dame at Michigan State	The home team has won the last four games in this series.
Cal at Ohio State	Challenging game for the guys coached by Urban Meyer.
Sept. 22	
Michigan at Notre Dame	A college football classic (and maybe meaningful, too).
Sept. 29	
Ohio State at Michigan State	Last year, the Spartans nearly kept OSU scoreless.
Wisconsin at Nebraska	Huskers embarrassed themselves in Madison last year. Revenge?
Oct. 6	
Northwestern at Penn State	The Wildcats have dropped five straight to the Nittany Lions.
Nebraska at Ohio State	OSU hopes to atone for 27-6 lead it coughed up in Lincoln last year.
Oct. 13	
Iowa at Michigan State	The Hawkeyes' chance to climb into the Legends race.
Oct. 20	
Michigan State at Michigan	Wolverines trying to reclaim the state in this huge game.
Minnesota at Wisconsin	Badgers have toted Paul Bunyan's Axe in 15 of past 17 meetings.
Oct. 27	
Michigan State at Wisconsin	Picking up the series after two great games last season.
Michigan at Nebraska	After playing Michigan State, Michigan can't afford letdown.
Ohio State at Penn State	A game pitting two programs desperate to return to prominence.
Nov. 3	
Nebraska at Michigan State	Last year, Huskers ruined Spartans' bid for a perfect league mark.
Nov. 10	
Penn State at Nebraska	Not Osborne and Paterno ... but Pelini and O'Brien will do.
Northwestern at Michigan	A 28-point second half helped Michigan to victory last year.
Nov. 17	
Ohio State at Wisconsin	Urban Meyer, Bret Bielema brushing aside talk about hard feelings.
Nov. 23	
Nebraska at Iowa	Two lunch-bucket teams going to battle the day after Thanksgiving.
Nov. 24	
Michigan at Ohio State	OSU playing spoiler for Michigan's big postseason plans?
Dec. 1	
Big Ten Championship Game	If our predictions hold, Michigan vying for first Rose Bowl since '06 season.

FITZGERALD TOUSSAINT

Photo by Gregory Shamus/Getty Images

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Big Ten Champion
BCS (National title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Rose)

Big Ten #2	Capital One Bowl vs. SEC
Big Ten #3	Outback Bowl vs. SEC
Big Ten #4	Insight Bowl vs. Big 12
Big Ten #5	TaxSlayer.com Gator Bowl vs. SEC
Big Ten #6	Meineke Car Care Bowl of Texas vs. Big 12
Big Ten #7	TicketCity Bowl vs. Conference USA
Big Ten #8	Little Caesars Pizza Bowl vs. MAC

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Johnathan Hankins	DL	Jr.	Ohio State	Has the bulk (320-plus) to clog up the middle.
2. Montee Ball	RB	Sr.	Wisconsin	Possesses the right qualities (vision, patience, toughness).
3. William Gholston	DE/OLB	Jr.	Michigan State	Athletic rusher whose only hang-up will be "character issues."
4. Kawann Short	DT	Sr.	Purdue	Has the size to line up inside and the quickness to create pressure.
5. Johnny Adams	CB	Sr.	Michigan State	Could snap MSU's decade-long first-round drought.
6. Ricky Wagner	OT	Sr.	Wisconsin	Just another in UW's long list of first round OL prospects.
7. John Simon	DE	Sr.	Ohio State	Doesn't have eye-popping measurables, but strong, productive.
8. Taylor Lewan	OT	Jr.	Michigan	Should receive more attention this year with Michigan on the rise.
9. Travis Frederick	C/OG	Jr.	Wisconsin	NFL teams will appreciate his versatility.
10. Jordan Hill	DL	Sr.	Penn State	Lacks ideal size, but plays with leverage and makes plays.

By Josh Helmholdt | Rivals.com

BIG TEN RECRUITING

1. OHIO STATE: The complexion of this class changed on Nov. 28 when Urban Meyer was named head coach. Jim Tressel's resignation and the looming threat of NCAA sanctions hit the Buckeyes hard, and they were losing top in-state recruits to rival Midwest programs. Through Meyer's efforts, though, they added nine Rivals250 prospects in the final two months and signed the nation's fourth best class.

2. MICHIGAN: Head coach Brady Hoke and his staff did most of their damage in the spring and summer, landing 20 commitments before the end of July. The final class numbered 25 and is both deep and talented, with nine being ranked in the Rivals250. Two five-stars highlight the class: offensive tackle Kyle Kalis and defensive tackle Ondre Pipkins.

3. NEBRASKA: The Cornhuskers entered the 2012 class with limited scholarships available, and finished with a class of just 17 players. Nearly half of the class waited to commit until the final month before National Signing Day. Junior College transfer Mohammed Seisay should be an instant contributor at defensive back.

4. PURDUE: What is most impressive about the Boilermakers' haul is that their 26 signees hail from 16 different states. Danny Hope's staff signed prospects from New York to California and many places in between. Defensive lineman Ryan Watson is their highest ranked signee, and could immediately bolster a position that has long been a strength for the Boilermakers' defense.

5. MICHIGAN STATE: Michigan State signed the Big Ten's top wide receiver group, highlighted by three-star Monty Madaris and four-star Aaron Burbridge. The Spartans had limited scholarships available in the 2012 class, but they took care of needs at receiver, tight end, offensive line and defensive back.

6. IOWA: Head coach Kirk Ferentz was able to announce a class of 24 recruits on National Signing Day, including a quartet of four-star prospects. One of those four-stars is Pennsylvania running back Greg Garmon, who could be called upon early in his career after the Hawkeyes lost starter Marcus Coker to transfer following the 2011 season.

7.PENN STATE: Penn State's recruiting troubles started with the scandal in State College that resulted in the dismissal of iconic head coach Joe Paterno, then escalated when the University took almost two months to name his permanent successor. The result was a once-promising class that just barely finished as one of the top 50 classes in the nation.

8. NORTHWESTERN: Northwestern finishes with one of its highest rated classes during Pat Fitzgerald's tenure, bolstered by the signing of two four-star defensive linemen from the state of Ohio — end Ifeadi Odenigbo and tackle Greg Kuhar. The Wildcats did a solid job in the Midwest and went into the state of Texas for several players.

9. WISCONSIN: Four-star linebacker Vince Biegel and four-star offensive guard Dan Voltz are two of the best at their positions in the entire country, but overall the Badgers finished poorly after a strong start to the class last spring. The Badgers had limited scholarships available, but the loss of six assistant coaches diminished the momentum they had built early in the process.

10. MINNESOTA: The Gophers cleaned up in their own backyard, landing seven of the top nine prospects in the state of Minnesota. Quarterback Phillip Nelson was the big prize in-state, but they also complement him with 6-3, 200-pound Minnetonka, Minn., wide receiver Andre McDonald, who recommitted to the Gophers days before Signing Day after spending a few months on Vanderbilt's commitment list.

11. ILLINOIS: Tim Beckman tapped into his contacts throughout the Midwest to help him finish out Illinois' class after leaving Toledo in December to take the Illini's head coaching position. Twelve of the 19 players signed by Illinois committed to the program after Beckman took over as head coach.

12. INDIANA: The class of 2012 will be most remembered as the one in which Indiana had a commitment from five-star quarterback Gunner Kiel before the in-state signal caller opted to take his talents elsewhere. But Kevin Wilson's first full class in Bloomington is still a large group of 25 signees that can address a lot of needs on the roster.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Noah Spence	6-4/245	DE	Harrisburg (Pa.) Bishop McDevitt	Ohio State
2.	Ondre Pipkins	6-3/325	DT	Kansas City (Mo.) Park Hill	Michigan
3.	Kyle Kalis	6-5/302	OT	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward	Michigan
4.	Adolphus Washington	6-4/230	DE	Cincinnati (Ohio) Taft	Ohio State
5.	Tommy Schutt	6-2/301	DT	Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Glenbard West	Ohio State
6.	Vince Biegel	6-3/210	LB	Wisconsin Rapids (Wis.) Lincoln	Wisconsin
7.	Eric Magnuson	6-6/275	OT	Carlsbad (Calif.) La Costa Canyon	Michigan
8.	Se'von Pittman	6-5/245	DE	Canton (Ohio) McKinley	Ohio State
9.	Ifeadi Odenigbo	6-4/210	DE	Centerville (Ohio) High	Northwestern
10.	Joey O'Connor	6-4/295	OT	Windsor (Colo.) High	Ohio State
11.	Aaron Burbridge	6-1/175	WR	Farmington Hills (Mich.) Harrison	Michigan State
12.	Mohammed Seisay	6-2/200	CB	Thatcher (Ariz.) Eastern Arizona J.C.	Nebraska
13.	Joe Bolden	6-2/225	LB	Cincinnati (Ohio) Colerain	Michigan
14.	Bri'onte Dunn	6-2/215	RB	Canton (Ohio) Glenoak	Ohio State
15.	Eugene Lewis	6-2/181	WR	Plymouth (Pa.) Wyoming Valley	Penn State
16.	Josh Perry	6-4/228	LB	Galena (Ohio) Olentangy	Ohio State
17.	Paul Thurston	6-5/274	OT	Arvada (Colo.) West	Nebraska
18.	Dan Voltz	6-5/289	OG	Barrington (Ill.) High	Wisconsin
19.	David Perkins	6-2/225	ATH	South Bend (Ind.) Washington	Ohio State
20.	Camren Williams	6-2/215	LB	West Roxbury (Mass.) Catholic Memorial	Ohio State

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR: ONDRE PIPKINS

Michigan lost second-team All-Big Ten nose tackle Mike Martin to graduation and have little depth coming back at the position in 2012. Pipkins, a 6-3, 325-pound prospect from Kansas City, was billed as the nation's third best defensive tackle prospect in the 2012 class and has the tools to step into Martin's spot immediately.

TOP SLEEPER: DAVID FENNELL

Michigan State was looking for one more addition along the defensive line late in the 2012 recruiting cycle and had several legitimate Midwest prospects awaiting an offer. But head coach Mark Dantonio went all the way out to Portland, Ore., and found defensive tackle David Fennell, an athletic 6-3, 274-pounder who had flown under the radar of most programs. Fennell has the ability to play anywhere from defensive end to nose tackle.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER: ADOLPHUS WASHINGTON

Defensive end Adolphus Washington was not only a five-star prospect and U.S. Army All-American, he also was a finalist for Mr. Basketball in the state of Ohio as a senior. The 6-4, 230-pound Washington has exceptional physical talents, but he has spent his offseasons playing basketball for his high school and AAU teams. Once the Ohio State signee starts to put in a full year of work on the gridiron, he will blossom.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP: KYLE KALIS

Cleveland offensive lineman Kyle Kalis grew up a lifelong fan of the Ohio State Buckeyes, and when they offered him in September of his junior year he immediately committed. In the wake of Jim Tressel's resignation at Ohio State, however, Kalis decided to look at other schools and within two months issued a commitment to Michigan — and signed with the Wolverines in February.

BIGGEST MISS: KYLE DODSON AND J.J. DENMAN

Offensive tackle was a big need for Wisconsin in the 2012 class, and they addressed that early in the process with commitments from Kyle Dodson of Cleveland and J.J. Denman of Pennsylvania. However, both Denman and Dodson rescinded those pledges to the Badgers in the wake of six assistant coaches leaving the program late in the fall. Dodson eventually signed with Ohio State and Denman ended up at Rutgers.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF: MICHIGAN

Even before his team went 11-2 and won the Sugar Bowl, Brady Hoke had revived the Wolverines' clout on the recruiting trail. Led by the efforts of recruiting coordinator Jeff Hecklinski and defensive coordinator Greg Mattison, Michigan had received commitments from 20 prospects before the end of July and eventually signed the nation's seventh best class in 2012.

RANKING

7 MICHIGAN | WOLVERINES

Big Ten rank: 1 Record: 11-2 Big Ten record: 6-2 (2nd, Legends) Stadium: Michigan Stadium (109,901)

Denard Robinson

Photo by Joe Robbins

"It wasn't a successful season — our mission every year is to win a Big Ten championship and we didn't do that."
— S Jordan Kovacs, on 2011

WOLVERINES at a GLANCE

COACH: Brady Hoke — At Michigan: 11-2, 1 year
OVERALL: 58-52, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Al Borges
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Mattison

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Denard Robinson, RB Fitz Toussaint, WR Roy Roundtree, C Ricky Barnum, LT Taylor Lewan, DE Craig Roh, DT Will Campbell, S Jordan Kovacs

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: An improved Denard Robinson should bring even more stability to an offense that averaged 33.3 points per game. Having Toussaint as the established tailback should further spark the ground attack. An experienced secondary should have corrected mistakes that led to opponents' big plays late last year.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Only time will tell if Robinson has eliminated his propensity for turnovers. With Mike Martin, Ryan Van Bergen and Will Heininger gone on the defensive line, getting production from players in new positions and toughness up the middle could be a question mark.

OFFENSE

Offensive coordinator Al Borges ventured outside his comfort zone more last year than at any other time in his coaching career.

Known for operating pro-style offenses, Borges implemented elements of the spread to keep multi-talented quarterback Denard Robinson as comfortable as possible.

Robinson — who saw his ground production cut by more than 600 yards under Borges — vastly improved as a passer. After completing only 55 percent of his throws last year and throwing a career-high 15 interceptions, Robinson honed in this spring on making better decisions and not throwing off his back foot like he did last year.

But he's not the only one more comfortable in Year 2 of running Borges' hybrid system.

Tailback Fitz Toussaint made marked improvements and will be the feature back after running for 1,041 yards and nine touchdowns last season. Toussaint improved his pass protection and pass-catching skills and should be more of a complete back to anchor a stable that includes Thomas Rawls, Vincent Smith and Justice Hayes.

Roy Roundtree headlines a balanced receiving corps and will play a key role in replacing leading receiver Junior Hemingway, who made 34 catches for 699 yards and four touchdowns.

DEFENSE

The defensive line underwent a major facelift following the graduation of nose tackle Mike Martin, defensive end Ryan Van Bergen and defensive tackle Will Heininger. To accommodate for the losses, coach Brady Hoke shuffled personnel to create better fits up front.

Defensive end Craig Roh jumped from weak-side end to the strong side, while defensive end Jibreel Black transitioned to tackle to give him more opportunity to use his speed inside. Senior Will Campbell assumes a key role at nose tackle to provide toughness up the middle.

Leading tackler Kenny Demens (94 tackles) is the tone-setter at middle linebacker. Hoke said at the end of spring ball that he felt the unit up the middle played soft and needed to establish a harder edge before the season began.

The defensive backfield is a mixed bag led by senior safety Jordan Kovacs. The secondary has to shore up some weaknesses against the big play, which was a problem down the stretch of the regular season last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

After kicking a 34-yard game-winning field goal to lift Michigan to a Sugar Bowl win over Virginia Tech, placekicker Brendan Gibbons returns as the face of a unit that won't change much.

Gibbons proved to be a consistent performer after connecting on 13 of 17 field-goal attempts. Will Hagerup and Matt Wile each saw time at punter and are in a tight competition for the starting job.

OVERVIEW

The potential for Michigan to build on last year's 11-2 campaign and win the Big Ten is certainly there. But with a much tougher schedule — starting with defending national champion Alabama and road games against Notre Dame and Ohio State — it's not out of the realm of possibility the Wolverines could face some uphill battles.

TOP NEWCOMER

LG Joey Burzynski: The redshirt sophomore walk-on was a virtual unknown when camp began, but Burzynski's work ethic and consistency throughout spring practice helped him gain the starting left guard spot in the final scrimmage. He hasn't earned the permanent job, but he's done everything he could.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	16	**Denard Robinson***	6-0	195	Sr.
RB	28	**Fitz Toussaint***	5-10	195	Jr.
FB	33	Stephen Hopkins	6-0	228	Jr.
WR	12	**Roy Roundtree***	6-0	177	Sr.
WR	10	Jeremy Gallon	5-10	185	Jr.
TE	89	Brandon Moore	6-5	255	Sr.
LT	77	**Taylor Lewan***	6-8	302	Jr.
LG	56	Joey Burzynski	6-1	284	So.
C	52	Ricky Barnum	6-3	292	Sr.
RG	65	**Patrick Omameh***	6-4	299	Sr.
RT	75	**Michael Schofield***	6-7	299	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	88	**Craig Roh***	6-5	269	Sr.
NT	73	Will Campbell	6-5	322	Sr.
DT	55	Jibreel Black	6-2	260	Jr.
DE	97	Brennen Beyer	6-3	225	So.
LB	44	**Desmond Morgan***	6-1	220	So.
LB	25	**Kenny Demens***	6-1	248	Sr.
LB	90	**Jake Ryan***	6-3	230	So.
CB	18	Blake Countess	5-10	176	So.
CB	8	**J.T. Floyd***	6-0	185	Sr.
S	32	**Jordan Kovacs***	6-0	197	Sr.
S	30	**Thomas Gordon***	5-11	208	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	34	**Brendan Gibbons***	6-1	241	Jr.
P	43	**Will Hagerup***	6-4	225	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Alabama (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 8	AIR FORCE
Sept. 15	MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 22	at Notre Dame
Oct. 6	at Purdue
Oct. 13	ILLINOIS
Oct. 20	MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 27	at Nebraska
Nov. 3	at Minnesota
Nov. 10	NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 17	IOWA
Nov. 24	at Ohio State

2011 RESULTS

W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	34-10
W	NOTRE DAME	35-31
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	31-3
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	28-7
W	MINNESOTA	58-0
W	at Northwestern	42-24
L	at Michigan State	14-28
W	PURDUE	36-14
L	at Iowa	16-24
W	at Illinois	31-14
W	NEBRASKA	45-17
W	OHIO STATE	40-34
	Sugar Bowl	
W	vs. Virginia Tech (OT)	23-20

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.3	26
Rushing	221.9	13
Passing	182.9	93
Total	404.7	42
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	17.4	6
Rushing	131.7	39
Pass	190.5	16
Total	322.2	17
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+7	+0.54	25

RANKING

12 MICHIGAN STATE | SPARTANS

Big Ten rank: 2 Record: 11-3 Big Ten record: 7-2 (1st, Legends) Stadium: Spartan Stadium (75,005)

Le'Veon Bell

Photo by Eric Francis/Getty Images

"After the bowl game, we (came up with), 'OK, no more Rose Bowl, we want a national championship.'"
— LB Denicos Allen

SPARTANS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mark Dantonio — At Michigan State: 44-22, 6 years
OVERALL: 62-39, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Roushar
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pat Narduzzi

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 5 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Andrew Maxwell, RB Le'Veon Bell, DE William Gholston, DE Marcus Rush, LB Denicos Allen, CB Johnny Adams, SS Isaiah Lewis

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The bulk of a defense that ranked sixth nationally last season returns, including disruptive Gholston and Adams, both likely first-round NFL draft picks. A veteran offensive line and backfield, led by Bell, should help the Spartans do much better than 11th in the Big Ten in rushing, as they were in 2011.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Michigan State's projected top three wideouts (Tony Lippett, Bennie Fowler and Keith Mumphery) caught a combined eight passes last season and struggled to stay healthy this spring, as did Maxwell, a first-year starter at quarterback. In other words, there are plenty of questions about the Spartans' passing game.

OFFENSE

Mark Dantonio's first spring press conference was humming along without incident, until a reporter asked about starting running back Le'Veon Bell. "I think it's important we're not complacent," Dantonio responded bluntly.

A perceived motivational ploy, Dantonio likely wanted to make sure he'd be getting the best from the one offensive skill player he knows he can count on.

Bell took over as the starter at midseason and finished with 948 yards rushing behind a young offensive line. That crew returns four starters, meaning the Big Ten's 11th-ranked rushing offense should move up considerably.

It might have to. There is nothing else on this offense that's proven — no quarterback, wideouts, tight ends or fullbacks.

There's enough perceived talent, beginning with junior quarterback Andrew Maxwell, that no one is panicking. But no one is sure what to expect, either. Any chance to figure that out during the spring was hampered by a bevy of injuries, including to Maxwell (29 of 51, 294 yards in nine career games as a backup). He missed the final two weeks of spring practice with a sprained knee.

Possible go-to wideout Bennie Fowler missed all but a few snaps this spring while recovering from surgery on a broken foot. Two other possible starters, sophomores Tony Lippett and Keith Mumphery, battled injuries late in the spring. And none of the three has done enough — 22 catches among them — to be certain commodities this fall.

Junior tight end Dion Sims appears ready for an expanded role.

DEFENSE

The Spartans' sixth-ranked defense — which posted a Big Ten-best 45 sacks last season — returns a strong core, led by junior defensive end William Gholston.

The collective strength of this defense is probably at linebacker, where the trio of senior Chris Norman and juniors Max Bullough and Denicos Allen is back. That's 248 tackles and 16.5 sacks (11 from Allen) from last season — more returning production at the position than any other Big Ten program.

Two-time All-Big Ten cornerback Johnny Adams flirted with the idea of leaving for the pros. Instead, he stuck around and may find himself featured on both sides of the ball.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior kicker Dan Conroy is 31 of 38 on field-goal attempts over his two seasons as the Spartans' primary kicker. Junior Kevin Muma is expected to handle kickoffs again, while punter Mike Sadler averaged better than 41 yards per kick as a true freshman. Sophomore running back Nick Hill might be the replacement for Keshawn Martin in both return games, though that's far from settled.

OVERVIEW

After 22 wins in two seasons, Michigan State expects nothing less than that kind of success this year, or any year. The defense appears to be in place for another run at a Big Ten title. But Maxwell has yet to throw a meaningful college pass. With divisional foes Michigan and Nebraska both boasting similarly big expectations, there isn't much leeway for growing pains.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Andre Sims Jr.: The 5-9, 187-pound redshirt freshman jumped onto the radar when he was chosen in the spring game player draft ahead of more accomplished and heralded receivers. Sims ended up with three receptions for 22 yards, including the spring game's only touchdown catch, a 3-yard strike in the back of the end zone.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	Andrew Maxwell	6-3	212	Jr.
RB	**24**	**Le'Veon Bell***	**6-2**	**238**	**Jr.**
FB	38	Niko Palazeti	6-1	250	So.
WR	13	Bennie Fowler	6-1	218	Jr.
WR	14	Tony Lippett	6-2	189	So.
TE	80	Dion Sims	6-5	280	Jr.
LT	**59**	**Dan France***	**6-6**	**316**	**Jr.**
LG	64	Blake Treadwell	6-3	299	Jr.
C	**63**	**Travis Jackson***	**6-3**	**280**	**So.**
RG	**62**	**Chris McDonald***	**6-5**	**299**	**Sr.**
RT	**51**	**Fou Fonoti***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**44**	**Marcus Rush***	**6-2**	**250**	**So.**
DT	98	Anthony Rashad White	6-2	320	Sr.
NT	91	Tyler Hoover	6-7	295	Sr.
DE	**2**	**William Gholston***	**6-7**	**275**	**Jr.**
LB	**10**	**Chris Norman***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**40**	**Max Bullough***	**6-3**	**252**	**Jr.**
LB	**28**	**Denicos Allen***	**5-11**	**232**	**Jr.**
CB	**31**	**Darqueze Dennard***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
CB	**5**	**Johnny Adams***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**
SS	**9**	**Isaiah Lewis***	**5-10**	**195**	**Jr.**
FS	27	Kurtis Drummond	6-1	197	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**4**	**Dan Conroy***	**5-10**	**194**	**Sr.**
P	**3**	**Mike Sadler***	**6-0**	**183**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	BOISE STATE
Sept. 8	at Central Michigan
Sept. 15	NOTRE DAME
Sept. 22	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 29	OHIO STATE
Oct. 6	at Indiana
Oct. 13	IOWA
Oct. 20	at Michigan
Oct. 27	at Wisconsin
Nov. 3	NEBRASKA
Nov. 17	NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 24	at Minnesota

2011 RESULTS

W	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	28-6
W	FAU	44-0
L	at Notre Dame	13-31
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	45-7
W	at Ohio State	10-7
W	MICHIGAN	28-14
W	WISCONSIN	37-31
L	at Nebraska	3-24
W	MINNESOTA	31-24
W	at Iowa	37-21
W	INDIANA	55-3
W	at Northwestern	31-17
	Big Ten Championship Game	
L	Wisconsin	39-42
	Outback Bowl	
W	vs. Georgia (3OT)	33-30

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.0	37
Rushing	137.9	78
Passing	252.5	41
Total	390.4	56
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.4	10
Rushing	100.5	9
Pass	176.9	11
Total	277.4	6
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.50	26

RANKING

14 OHIO STATE | BUCKEYES

Big Ten rank: 3 Record: 6-7 Big Ten record: 3-5 (4th, Leaders) Stadium: Ohio Stadium (102,329)

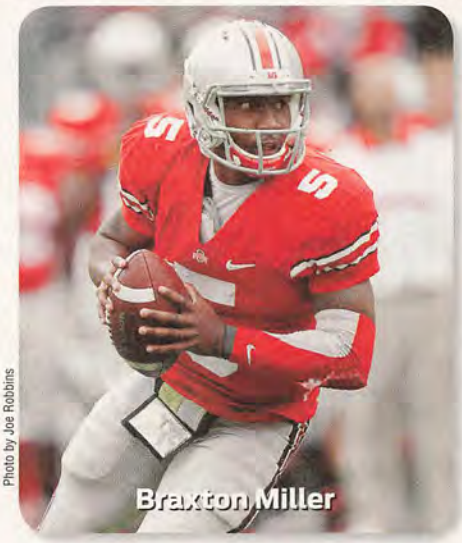


Photo by Joe Robbins

"I'd expect our defense to get close to Ohio State's standards real soon."
— Coach Urban Meyer

BUCKEYES at a GLANCE

COACH: Urban Meyer — At Ohio State: 1st year
OVERALL: 104-23, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Tom Herman, Ed Warinner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Luke Fickell, Everett Withers

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1999
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Braxton Miller, RB Jordan Hall, TE Jake Stoneburner, DL John Simon, DL Johnathan Hankins, LB Ryan Shazier, CB Bradley Roby

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive line, anchored by Simon and Hankins, is impressive and should be stout against the run or rushing the passer. The secondary figures to be sterling in coverage. On offense, Meyer's spread suits Miller's skill set at quarterback and Stoneburner's ability as a receiver.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The passing game was one of the worst in the country last season; will the spread offense help? Miller has to work on accuracy and decision-making, and his receivers haven't proved to be reliable. The offensive line lacks depth. A dearth of capable linebackers could be problematic.

OFFENSE

Urban Meyer's spread offense will incorporate elements of Ohio State's more traditional power running game.

"We're going to be a very balanced offense," Meyer said.

The offense struggled to move the ball through the air in a 6-7 season, passing for just 127 yards per game.

Braxton Miller led the team in rushing as a freshman quarterback with 715 yards. As a passer, he's a work in progress but could flourish this season. He completed 54.1 percent of his throws with a 13-4 touchdown-to-interception ratio a year ago.

Meyer sees senior Jordan Hall in a hybrid role as a running back/receiver. The No. 2 running back is powerful Carlos Hyde (566 yards rushing in 2011).

Nobody on the team had more than 14 receptions last season. Meyer identified tight end Jake Stoneburner (seven touchdown receptions in 2011) and wideouts Corey "Philly" Brown, Devin Smith and freshman Michael Thomas as potential big-play threats.

The line lost three starters and lacks depth. Junior Jack Mewhort has moved to left tackle from guard; Andrew Norwell returns at left guard.

DEFENSE

Ohio State has a veteran crew and, schematically, there won't be any major modifications.

However, the staff has changed. Luke Fickell added coaching the linebackers to his coordinator duties. Mike Vrabel switched from linebackers to the defensive line. Everett Withers came on board as co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach after a season as the interim head coach at North Carolina. Kerry Coombs was hired from Cincinnati to handle the cornerbacks.

A well-stocked defensive line is led by returning third-team Associated Press All-American John Simon and junior tackle Johnathan Hankins, a top-notch pro prospect.

At linebacker, depth is shallow after the top four of Etienne Sabino, Storm Klein, Ryan Shazier and Curtis Grant.

The secondary should be set with returning starters Bradley Roby and Travis Howard at cornerback, and C.J. Barnett and Christian Bryant at safety. Orhian Johnson has started games at safety in his career. Doran Grant will be the third cornerback.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Drew Basil took over placekicking duties last season. After a rocky start — he missed his first two field-goal attempts — he finished 16 of 19, including 10 of 10 inside the 40.

Ben Buchanan enters his third year as the punter. He's steady, averaging 41.3 and 41.0 yards the past two seasons.

Hall was fifth in the Big Ten in kickoff returns, with a 26.3-yard average, and sixth in punt returns (5.8-yard average) last season.

OVERVIEW

The Buckeyes aren't eligible for the postseason because of their one-year bowl ban, but there's still plenty to be excited about this fall. There's also the incentive to atone for last year's 6-7 record, Ohio State's first sub-.500 mark since 1988. Fans can't wait to see Meyer's spread offense in action. He has spent the past few months motivating and challenging his players to compete at a championship level. It begins now.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Michael Thomas: The freshman enrolled for the winter quarter and impressed coaches with his work ethic and dedication. Thomas had a breakout spring game with 12 receptions for 131 yards. He is nephew of former USC and NFL standout Keyshawn Johnson.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	5	Braxton Miller*	6-2	210	So.
RB	7	Jordan Hall*	5-9	198	Sr.
FB	44	Zach Boren*	6-1	246	Sr.
WR	10	Corey Brown*	6-0	186	Jr.
WR	15	Devin Smith	6-1	196	So.
TE	11	Jake Stoneburner*	6-5	245	Sr.
LT	74	Jack Mewhort*	6-6	310	Jr.
LG	78	Andrew Norwell*	6-6	304	Jr.
C	71	Corey Linsley	6-3	292	Jr.
RG	79	Marcus Hall	6-6	317	Jr.
RT	77	Reid Fragel	6-8	298	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	54	John Simon*	6-2	260	Sr.
DT	52	Johnathan Hankins*	6-4	317	Jr.
DT	53	Garrett Goebel*	6-4	285	Sr.
DE	63	Michael Bennett	6-3	277	So.
LB	10	Ryan Shazier	6-1	210	So.
LB	14	Curtis Grant	6-3	265	So.
LB	6	Etienne Sabino	6-3	237	Sr.
CB	25	Bradley Roby*	5-11	190	So.
CB	7	Travis Howard*	6-1	196	Sr.
S	2	Christian Bryant*	5-10	190	Jr.
S	4	C.J. Barnett*	6-1	202	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	24	Drew Basil*	6-2	210	Jr.
P	17	Ben Buchanan*	5-11	190	Sr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 8	UCF
Sept. 15	CALIFORNIA
Sept. 22	UAB
Sept. 29	at Michigan State
Oct. 6	NEBRASKA
Oct. 13	at Indiana
Oct. 20	PURDUE
Oct. 27	at Penn State
Nov. 3	ILLINOIS
Nov. 17	at Wisconsin
Nov. 24	MICHIGAN

2011 RESULTS

W	AKRON	42-0
W	TOLEDO	27-22
L	at Miami	6-24
W	COLORADO	37-17
L	MICHIGAN STATE	7-10
L	at Nebraska	27-34
W	at Illinois	17-7
W	WISCONSIN	33-29
W	INDIANA	34-20
L	at Purdue (OT)	23-26
L	PENN STATE	14-20
L	at Michigan	34-40
	Gator Bowl	
L	vs. Florida	17-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.5	81
Rushing	191.2	27
Passing	127.0	115
Total	318.2	107
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.0	27
Rushing	141.5	50
Pass	182.0	14
Total	323.5	19
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.38	30

RANKING

17 WISCONSIN | BADGERS

Big Ten rank: 4 Record: 11-3 Big Ten record:6-2 (T-1st, Leaders) Stadium: Camp Randall (80,321)

Photo by Gary A. Vasquez-US PRESSWIRE

"We have a number of good players that come back, as well as some young ones that are going to rise up and help us make a run for our third title." — Coach Bret Bielema

BADGERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bret Bielema — At Wisconsin and overall: 60-19, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Canada
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Chris Ash, Charlie Partridge

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 5 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Danny O'Brien, RB Montee Ball, WR Jared Abbrederis, TE Jacob Pedersen, LT Ricky Wagner, LB Chris Borland, LB Mike Taylor, DE David Gilbert

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The depth at tailback is as good as any team in the country and the offensive line and tight ends are strong, per usual. This should be one of the best linebacker groups in years, with difference-makers in Borland and Taylor.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Redshirt freshman walk-on Joel Stave looks like the only challenger to O'Brien at quarterback. Wide receivers struggled in the spring with Abbrederis out. The defense must find a pass rush or the secondary could be an issue.

OFFENSE

For the second straight year, Wisconsin is turning to a transfer quarterback from the ACC to help it win another Big Ten title.

Danny O'Brien was the ACC's Rookie of the Year at Maryland in 2010, but struggled last season following a coaching change and a switch to a spread offense. He took advantage of the same NCAA rule that allowed Russell Wilson to go from North Carolina State and play for the Badgers right away last season, after graduating.

Freshman walk-on Joel Stave impressed in spring practice and could compete with O'Brien for playing time.

Coordinator Matt Canada comes from Northern Illinois, one of four new coaches on offense and six new assistants overall. Running back Montee Ball shocked many people by returning, after being a Heisman Trophy finalist and tying Barry Sanders' NCAA record with 39 touchdowns.

Tailback is so loaded, look for backup James White and Ball to get on the field together, while redshirt freshman Melvin Gordon appears to be the next great back.

Two All-Americans departed from the offensive line, but that's hardly new. The same thing happened the previous year and the line thrived. Senior left tackle Ricky Wagner and junior center Travis Frederick are next in line for accolades.

None of the receivers emerged in the spring to complement walk-on success story Jared Abbrederis, but junior Jacob Pedersen leads a talented group of tight ends that could compensate.

DEFENSE

The strength is at linebacker, where senior Mike Taylor and junior Chris Borland return after finishing one-two in the Big Ten in tackles.

The defensive line must develop a playmaker, which is why junior defensive end David Gilbert's return to form is paramount. He redshirted last season after breaking a foot prior to the conference opener, then broke it again in practice prior to the Rose Bowl.

Junior defensive tackle Beau Allen showed signs of being a disruptive force in the spring.

Cornerback Devin Smith gets a senior re-do after fracturing his left foot in the second game, causing him to redshirt. Athletic junior Dezmen Southward will be a key, moving to free safety after backing up at strong safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Change is coming after four years of punter Brad Nortman and kicker Philip Welch.

Sophomore Kyle French's transition was helped when he filled in for an injured Welch early last season. Replacing the dependable Nortman — a sixth-round draft choice by Carolina — falls to redshirt freshman walk-on Drew Meyer.

Abbrederis ranked third nationally in punt returns (15.8) and also returned kicks. He's now the No. 1 receiver, so coaches might want to lighten his load.

OVERVIEW

The talent drain the past two seasons has been considerable, with 11 players drafted, including three in the first round. Even so, the Badgers remain the favorite to win the Leaders Division (with Ohio State ineligible) and are trying to claim a third straight Big Ten title for first time in school history.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Danny O'Brien: The transfer will be unfairly compared to one-year wonder Russell Wilson, who had the best season ever by a Wisconsin quarterback. At least O'Brien has two years remaining to make an impact.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	N/A	Danny O'Brien	6-3	215	Jr.
RB	**28**	**Montee Ball***	**5-11**	**212**	**Sr.**
WR	**4**	**Jared Abbrederis***	**6-2**	**180**	**Jr.**
WR	15	Jeff Duckworth	6-0	212	Jr.
TE	85	Brian Wozniak	6-4	260	Jr.
TE	**48**	**Jacob Pedersen***	**6-4**	**242**	**Jr.**
LT	**58**	**Ricky Wagner***	**6-6**	**322**	**Sr.**
LG	79	Ryan Groy	6-5	322	Jr.
C	**72**	**Travis Frederick***	**6-4**	**328**	**Jr.**
RG	64	Robert Burge	6-7	320	Sr.
RT	78	Rob Havenstein	6-8	343	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	92	Pat Muldoon	6-3	258	Jr.
DT	96	Beau Allen	6-3	323	Jr.
DT	**87**	**Ethan Hemer***	**6-6**	**305**	**Jr.**
DE	**97**	**Brendan Kelly***	**6-6**	**255**	**Sr.**
LB	**44**	**Chris Borland***	**5-11**	**250**	**Jr.**
LB	**53**	**Mike Taylor***	**6-2**	**222**	**Sr.**
LB	17	A.J. Fenton	6-1	219	Jr.
CB	**14**	**Marcus Cromartie***	**6-1**	**188**	**Sr.**
CB	10	Devin Smith	5-11	190	Sr.
SS	**24**	**Shelton Johnson***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
FS	12	Dezmen Southward	6-2	210	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	94	Kyle French	6-1	193	So.
P	90	Drew Meyer	6-2	182	Fr.

* Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 8	at Oregon State
Sept. 15	UTAH STATE
Sept. 22	UTEP
Sept. 29	at Nebraska
Oct. 6	ILLINOIS
Oct. 13	at Purdue
Oct. 20	MINNESOTA
Oct. 27	MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 10	at Indiana
Nov. 17	OHIO STATE
Nov. 24	at Penn State

2011 RESULTS

W	UNLV	51-17
W	OREGON STATE	35-0
W	at Northern Illinois	49-7
W	SOUTH DAKOTA	59-10
W	NEBRASKA	48-17
W	INDIANA	59-7
L	at Michigan State	31-37
L	at Ohio State	29-33
W	PURDUE	62-17
W	at Minnesota	42-13
W	at Illinois	28-17
W	PENN STATE	45-7
	Big Ten Championship Game	
W	at Michigan State	42-39
	Rose Bowl	
L	vs. Oregon	38-45

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	44.1	6
Rushing	235.6	11
Passing	234.3	61
Total	469.9	14

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.0	13
Rushing	152.8	60
Pass	163.6	4
Total	316.4	15

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 16	+ 1.14	4

RANKING **25**

NEBRASKA | HUSKERS

Big Ten rank: 5 **Record: 9-4** **Big Ten record: 5-3 (3rd, Legends)** **Stadium: Memorial (81,091)**

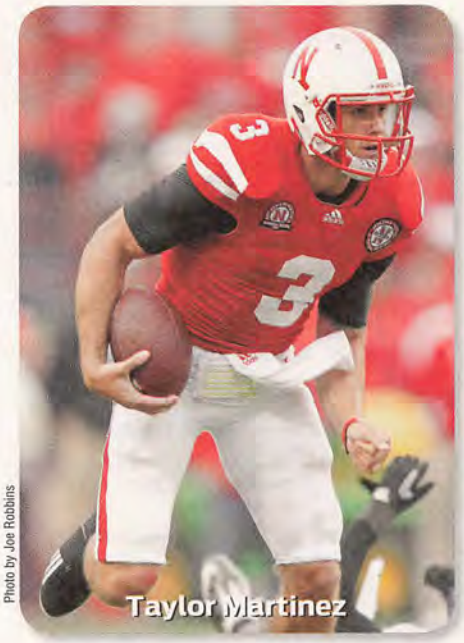


Photo by Joe Robbins

"We're sick of being a good team."
— I-back Rex Burkhead, aspiring to be great

HUSKERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bo Pelini — At Nebraska and overall: 39-16, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Beck
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Papuchis

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 8 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Taylor Martinez, RB Rex Burkhead, WR Kenny Bell, WR Quincy Enunwa, DT Baker Steinkuhler, LB Will Compton, SS Daimion Stafford, K/P Brett Maher

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Huskers should be an effective running team, with Burkhead and sophomores Aaron Green and Ameer Abdullah operating behind a talented offensive line. Martinez is a three-year starter at quarterback and the receiving corps is deep. Defense has plenty of experience returning.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense loses its three best players; LB Lavonte David, in particular, will be sorely missed. The Huskers need to shore up an inconsistent pass rush and sort out roles in the secondary. The offensive line needs three new starters, in addition to developing depth.

OFFENSE

Most of the news is good. The Huskers return eight full-time starters and four other players with starting experience.

I-back Rex Burkhead headlines what should be a formidable ground attack. There is more talent than last year at receiver. The offensive line is deeper than it has been in years.

To top it off, junior quarterback Taylor Martinez is set to begin his third season as a starter. That generally would provide a level of comfort, considering he threw for the sixth-most yards (2,089) in a single season in school history.

Yet, Martinez can be a polarizing figure. Some discount his ability to lead; critics find fault with his often-unorthodox throwing motion.

Martinez should make strides in year two in offensive coordinator Tim Beck's system, but the wise course of action might be to take a wait-and-see approach.

The Huskers figure to rely heavily on Burkhead and a stable of impressive young running backs that includes sophomores Ameer Abdullah and Aaron Green. Kenny Bell, Quincy Enunwa, Tim Marlowe and Jamal Turner give Martinez an experienced group of wide receivers, and Ben Cotton and Kyler Reed are a potent 1-2 punch at tight end.

Nebraska must replace three starters on the line, but the coaches are encouraged that a group headlined by second-team All-Big Ten performer Spencer Long will be capable of playing at a high level.

DEFENSE

Bo Pelini hangs his hat on his ability to mold top-flight defenses. The Huskers fell short of achieving that level last season, finishing 37th nationally in total defense and only 64th in rushing defense.

The Huskers return seven starters from that unit, but will be without their three biggest playmakers — linebacker Lavonte David, cornerback Alfonzo Dennard and defensive tackle Jared Crick. All three heard their names called in the NFL Draft.

Senior defensive end Cameron Meredith and tackle Baker Steinkuhler are the leaders across the front. The Huskers are loaded with experience at linebacker in seniors Will Compton, Sean Fisher and Alonzo Whaley.

New secondary coach Terry Joseph will have to sort through 14 lettermen, in addition to highly regarded junior college transfer Mohammed Seisay and converted I-back Braylon Heard.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Nebraska has a triple-threat guy in senior Brett Maher, who kicks, punts and kicks off. Maher was the first player since 2001 to be named All-Big Ten as a kicker and punter in the same season.

Ameer Abdullah is dangerous on kick returns — he finished ninth nationally — and had seven for more than 35 yards. Turner and Burkhead also are capable hands in the return game.

OVERVIEW

Pelini has the program on solid ground, but the Huskers have been unable to make the step from good to great in his first four seasons. The offense appears capable of creating plenty of headaches for opponents, but the key to improvement could be whether the defense sheds its inconsistency of a season ago.

TOP NEWCOMER

CB Mohammed Seisay: The junior college transfer had an impressive spring, showing signs of emerging as a playmaker in a secondary loaded with experienced players. Seisay, who attended Eastern Arizona Junior College, began his career at Memphis, where he earned Conference-USA All-Freshman honors in 2010.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	**Taylor Martinez***	6-1	200	Jr.
RB	22	**Rex Burkhead***	5-11	210	Sr.
FB	31	C.J. Zimmerer	6-0	230	Jr.
WR	80	**Kenny Bell***	6-1	185	So.
WR	18	**Quincy Enunwa***	6-2	215	Jr.
TE	81	**Ben Cotton***	6-6	255	Sr.
LT	73	Tyler Moore	6-6	300	So.
LG	77	**Seung Hoon Choi***	6-2	295	Sr.
C	62	Cole Pensick	6-2	275	Jr.
RG	61	**Spencer Long***	6-4	305	Jr.
RT	71	Jeremiah Sirles	6-6	310	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	34	**Cameron Meredith***	6-4	265	Sr.
DT	55	**Baker Steinkuhler***	6-6	290	Sr.
DT	97	Chase Rome	6-3	285	So.
DE	9	**Jason Ankrah***	6-4	265	Jr.
LB	45	Alonzo Whaley	6-1	230	Sr.
LB	51	**Will Compton***	6-2	230	Sr.
LB	42	Sean Fisher	6-6	235	Sr.
CB	11	**Andrew Green***	6-0	195	Jr.
CB	2	Antonio Bell	6-2	200	Sr.
SS	3	**Daimion Stafford***	6-1	205	Sr.
FS	13	P.J. Smith	6-2	210	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	96	**Brett Maher***	6-0	185	Sr.
P	96	**Brett Maher***	6-0	185	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 8	at UCLA
Sept. 15	ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 22	IDAHO STATE
Sept. 29	WISCONSIN
Oct. 6	at Ohio State
Oct. 20	at Northwestern
Oct. 27	MICHIGAN
Nov. 3	at Michigan State
Nov. 10	PENN STATE
Nov. 17	MINNESOTA
Nov. 23	at Iowa

2011 RESULTS

W	CHATTANOOGA	40-7
W	FRESNO STATE	42-29
W	WASHINGTON	51-38
W	at Wyoming	38-14
L	at Wisconsin	17-48
W	OHIO STATE	34-27
W	at Minnesota	41-14
W	MICHIGAN STATE	24-3
L	NORTHWESTERN	25-28
W	at Penn State	17-14
L	at Michigan	17-45
W	IOWA	20-7
	Capital One Bowl	
L	vs. South Carolina	13-30

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.2	50
Rushing	217.2	15
Passing	162.7	104
Total	379.9	66
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.4	42
Rushing	158.5	64
Pass	192.2	18
Total	350.7	37
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-1	-0.08	67

RANKING

27 PENN STATE | NITTANY LIONS

Big Ten rank: 6 Record: 9-4 Big Ten record: 6-2 (T-1st, Leaders) Stadium: Beaver Stadium (106,572)

Silas Redd

Photo by Mike DiNovo-US PRESSWIRE

"I think we're gonna blitz a lot more. It's a real fun defense."
— LB Glenn Carson

NITTANY LIONS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bill O'Brien — At Penn State and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill O'Brien
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ted Roof

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 3 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Silas Redd, WR Justin Brown, C Matt Stankiewitch, DT Jordan Hill, LB Gerald Hodges, LB Michael Mauti

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Redd is one of the best running backs in the Big Ten. The tight ends could be very productive in O'Brien's offense. Led by Hill and Mauti, the front seven should lead the defense again. Anthony Fera is one of the Big Ten's best kickers and punters.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: No quarterback was able to separate himself in the three-man race during spring practice. The offensive line lost all but one starter, and the secondary lost all four. Adjusting to new schemes on offense and defense might take some time.

OFFENSE

New coach Bill O'Brien made it a point to not look at tape of the Penn State offense after he was hired.

Perhaps for good reason. Last season, the Nittany Lions finished in the bottom three of the Big Ten in total offense, scoring and passing efficiency.

"I wanted to start with a clean slate," O'Brien said. "I didn't want to make any judgments not knowing the (past) scheme."

The former New England Patriots offensive coordinator has brought a pro-style offense to State College, but he has the same problem the Lions had the past two seasons — finding a quarterback.

Matt McGloin, Rob Bolden and Paul Jones competed for the No. 1 position this spring, but O'Brien wasn't ready to name a starter, or even the top two, at the end of spring practice.

McGloin was the most effective quarterback for Penn State the last two seasons, but he's thrown 14 interceptions in that time. Jones seems to be the most intriguing candidate, but he missed the last two seasons because of academic issues.

Bolden began 2010 and 2011 as the starter, but he completed just 39.3 percent of his passes last season and threw for only two touchdowns.

O'Brien has no decision to make at running back, where Silas Redd returns after rushing for 1,241 yards in 2011. Tight end Garry Gilliam is expected to be busy in O'Brien's offense.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Ted Roof will employ a high-risk, high-reward scheme, a departure from the Nittany Lions' former philosophy of bend but don't break.

Because Penn State has consistently ranked among the nation's top 15 defenses since 2004, it's no surprise that O'Brien retained defensive line coach Larry Johnson and linebackers coach Ron Vanderlinden from Joe Paterno's staff.

Tackle Jordan Hill and end Sean Stanley return to the line. At linebacker, Glenn Carson and Gerald Hodges are back and will play alongside Michael Mauti or Khairi Fortt, who missed all or most of spring practice with knee injuries.

Hodges was selected first-team All-Big Ten by the coaches last season after leading Penn State with 106 tackles, including 10 for loss, and 4.5 sacks.

While linebacker is a strength (as usual), Penn State has depth concerns in the secondary. Wide receiver Curtis Drake was converted to cornerback, and Adrian Amos moved from corner to safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Anthony Fera returns as Penn State's kicker and punter. He made 14 of 17 field-goal attempts last year, including a career-long 46-yarder. He averaged 42.0 yards per punt and was named to the All-Big Ten second team.

The rest of Penn State's special teams were mediocre.

OVERVIEW

O'Brien brings a pro-style offense to Penn State and has a feature back in Redd, but much depends on the quarterback position and the development of the offensive line. The defense will be strong, but that might not be good enough for the Lions to challenge for the Leaders Division title.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Eugene Lewis: He was rated a four-star recruit and the 22nd-best receiver prospect in the nation by Rivals.com. He also played quarterback in high school. Lewis picked Penn State over Maryland, Oregon, Pittsburgh and Virginia Tech.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	11	Matt McGloin	6-1	199	Sr.
TB	**25**	**Silas Redd***	**5-10**	**200**	**Jr.**
FB	9	Michael Zordich	6-1	242	Sr.
WR	**19**	**Justin Brown***	**6-3**	**209**	**Sr.**
WR	3	Devon Smith	5-7	147	Sr.
TE	89	Garry Gilliam	6-6	277	Jr.
LT	58	Adam Gress	6-6	306	Jr.
LG	65	Miles Dieffenbach	6-3	286	So.
C	**54**	**Matt Stankiewitch***	**6-3**	**295**	**Sr.**
RG	64	John Urschel	6-3	287	Jr.
RT	76	Donovan Smith	6-5	310	Fr.

DEFENSE

LE	**90**	**Sean Stanley***	**6-1**	**247**	**Sr.**
LT	**47**	**Jordan Hill***	**6-1**	**298**	**Sr.**
RT	91	DaQuan Jones	6-3	317	Jr.
RE	59	Pete Massaro	6-4	263	Sr.
LB	42	Michael Mauti	6-2	239	Sr.
LB	**40**	**Glenn Carson***	**6-3**	**238**	**Jr.**
LB	**6**	**Gerald Hodges***	**6-2**	**233**	**Sr.**
CB	2	Curtis Drake	5-11	173	Jr.
CB	12	Stephon Morris	5-8	188	Sr.
SS	10	Malcolm Willis	5-11	205	Jr.
FS	4	Adrian Amos	6-0	209	So.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	**30**	**Anthony Fera***	**6-2**	**220**	**Jr.**
P	**30**	**Anthony Fera***	**6-2**	**220**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	OHIO
Sept. 8	at Virginia
Sept. 15	NAVY
Sept. 22	TEMPLE
Sept. 29	at Illinois
Oct. 6	NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 20	at Iowa
Oct. 27	OHIO STATE
Nov. 3	at Purdue
Nov. 10	at Nebraska
Nov. 17	INDIANA
Nov. 24	WISCONSIN

2011 RESULTS

W	INDIANA STATE	41-7
L	ALABAMA	11-27
W	at Temple	14-10
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	34-6
W	at Indiana	16-10
W	IOWA	13-3
W	PURDUE	23-18
W	at Northwestern	34-24
W	ILLINOIS	10-7
L	NEBRASKA	14-17
W	at Ohio State	20-14
L	at Wisconsin	7-45
	Ticket City Bowl	
L	vs. Houston	14-30

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.3	110
Rushing	165.4	46
Passing	177.0	96
Total	342.4	95
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	16.8	5
Rushing	133.3	42
Pass	190.6	17
Total	323.9	20
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

41 IOWA | HAWKEYES

Big Ten rank: 7 **Record: 7-6** **Big Ten record: 4-4 (4th, Legends)** **Stadium: Kinnick Stadium (70,585)**

Photo by Michael Marti

"We need to be faster. We need to be able to stretch the field a little better. There is no question about that."
— Offensive coordinator Greg Davis

HAWKEYES at a GLANCE

COACH: Kirk Ferentz — At Iowa: 96-66, 13 years
OVERALL: 108-87, 16 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Davis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Parker

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 5 offense, 3 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB James Vandenberg, WR Keenan Davis, WR Kevonte Martin-Manley, TE C.J. Fiedorowicz, LB James Morris, LB Christian Kirksey, CB Micah Hyde, CB B.J. Lowery, FS Tanner Miller

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Vandenberg has an accurate arm and thrived more in the shotgun spread than under center last season. Davis has said he will play to the players' strengths. Fiedorowicz is a possible star at tight end. Hyde and Lowery are an excellent cover combination.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: DE Dominic Alvis is the Hawkeyes' top returning sack man — but he had just 1.5 in 2011. Iowa's defensive line is going to be young and that will be tough to overcome in the Big Ten. Running back is an issue, again. Incoming freshman Barkley Hill and Greg Garmon will be counted on the minute they arrive in Iowa City.

OFFENSE

Quarterback James Vandenberg passed for 3,022 yards and 25 touchdowns, with just seven interceptions, last season. His 404 attempts were second-most in Iowa history. He didn't lift Iowa's offense against the Big Ten's better defenses, but Iowa didn't lift Iowa against top competition, either.

Marcus Coker, who finished second in the Big Ten with 1,384 rushing yards last season, transferred after an investigation for an alleged sexual assault. Sophomore Jordan Canzeri, who took over for Coker, suffered a torn ACL in spring practice.

That left sophomores Damon Bullock and De'Andre Johnson. Bullock is the front-runner, but incoming freshmen Greg Garmon and Barkley Hill will contend for playing time.

Wide receiver Keenan Davis had a breakout junior season, catching 50 passes for 713 yards and four touchdowns as the second option to now-departed Marvin McNutt. Kevonte Martin-Manley is the No. 2 receiver.

Junior tight end C.J. Fiedorowicz earned major praise during the spring, with coach Kirk Ferentz saying, "He's clearly at a different level." Fiedorowicz caught 16 passes last season.

DEFENSE

The line is in flux. Going into spring practice, three redshirt freshmen held starting spots up front. Two were replaced during the course of spring. Junior end Dominic Alvis and sophomore tackle Carl Davis missed spring with knee injuries. Alvis should be a starter. Davis should contribute.

Redshirt freshman Darian Cooper has a tackle spot locked down. He's a boom-or-bust player who plays strong and low, but sometimes loses technique. Senior Steve Bigach probably takes the other tackle spot. He's a versatile player, leading the Hawkeyes' D-line with six career starts — all from last season — while playing end and tackle.

First-year coordinator Phil Parker has said Iowa will play more press coverage. The idea is to release a safety to the line of scrimmage to help in run support. Press coverage is also possible because Iowa has terrific corners in senior Micah Hyde and junior B.J. Lowery.

Iowa's linebackers should be a year better. Junior James Morris will be in his second year as a starter at middle linebacker. Junior Christian Kirksey is a potential star at outside linebacker. Parker singled out junior Anthony Hitchens as one of Iowa's most explosive players.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior John Wienke has the edge over sophomore Jonny Mullings at punter. Wienke came to Iowa as a quarterback and played there as late as last December. Don't count out true freshman Connor Kornbrath. Junior Mike Meyer made 12 of his first 14 field-goal attempts last season before hitting just two of his last six.

OVERVIEW

Iowa is a young team with two first-year coordinators and a revamped coaching staff. This clearly is a program in transition and the ride could be bumpy in year one. Vandenberg is a steady hand at quarterback, but a true freshman likely will be the starting running back. The defense will be nearly brand new up front. Iowa can't afford early stumbles, or else bowl eligibility might be a tough get in Ferentz 2.0.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Greg Garmon: The freshman gives the Hawkeyes a shifty running back with excellent acceleration, the one thing the position lacked last season. Garmon, who picked the Hawkeyes over Miami and Arkansas, has open-field skills that Iowa could put to use on kick returns this season.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**16**	**James Vandenberg***	**6-3**	**212**	**Sr.**
RB	32	Damon Bullock	6-0	195	So.
FB	**38**	**Brad Rogers***	**5-10**	**230**	**Jr.**
WR	**6**	**Keenan Davis***	**6-3**	**215**	**Sr.**
WR	11	Kevonte Martin-Manley	6-0	205	So.
TE	86	C.J. Fiedorowicz	6-7	265	Jr.
LT	68	Brandon Scherff	6-5	310	So.
LG	**60**	**Matt Tobin***	**6-6**	**290**	**Sr.**
C	**53**	**James Ferentz***	**6-2**	**284**	**Sr.**
RG	63	Austin Blythe	6-3	275	Fr.
RT	70	Brett Van Sloten	6-7	292	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	79	Dominic Alvis	6-4	265	Jr.
DT	54	Steve Bigach	6-3	282	Sr.
DT	97	Darian Cooper	6-2	280	Fr.
DE	99	Joe Gaglione	6-4	264	Sr.
LB	**44**	**James Morris***	**6-2**	**230**	**Jr.**
LB	**20**	**Christian Kirksey***	**6-2**	**220**	**Jr.**
LB	31	Anthony Hitchens	6-1	224	Jr.
CB	**18**	**Micah Hyde***	**6-1**	**190**	**Sr.**
CB	19	B.J. Lowery	5-11	188	Jr.
SS	21	Nico Law	6-1	195	So.
FS	5	Tanner Miller	6-2	201	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**96**	**Mike Meyer***	**6-2**	**185**	**Jr.**
P	14	John Wienke	6-5	220	Sr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Northern Illinois (Chicago)
Sept. 8	IOWA STATE
Sept. 15	NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 22	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 29	MINNESOTA
Oct. 13	at Michigan State
Oct. 20	PENN STATE
Oct. 27	at Northwestern
Nov. 3	at Indiana
Nov. 10	PURDUE
Nov. 17	at Michigan
Nov. 23	NEBRASKA

2011 RESULTS

W	TENNESSEE TECH	34-7
L	at Iowa State (3OT)	41-44
W	PITTSBURGH	31-27
W	ULM	45-17
L	at Penn State	3-13
W	NORTHWESTERN	41-31
W	INDIANA	45-24
L	at Minnesota	21-22
W	MICHIGAN	24-16
L	MICHIGAN STATE	21-37
W	at Purdue	31-21
L	at Nebraska	7-20
	Insight Bowl	
L	vs. Oklahoma	14-31

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.5	58
Rushing	137.7	79
Passing	234.8	59
Total	372.5	76
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.9	46
Rushing	156.0	62
Pass	222.9	58
Total	378.9	60
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

42 PURDUE | BOILERMAKERS

Big Ten rank: 8 Record: 7-6 Big Ten record: 4-4 (3rd, Leaders) Stadium: Ross-Ade Stadium (62,500)

Photo by Joe Robbins

"I like the direction we're going in."
— Coach Danny Hope

BOILERMAKERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Danny Hope — At Purdue: 16-21, 3 years
OVERALL: 51-43, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gary Nord
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Tibesar

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Caleb TerBush, QB Robert Marve, RB Akeem Shavers, WR/KR Raheem Mostert, DT Kawann Short, DE Ryan Russell, CB Ricardo Allen, CB Josh Johnson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive front and secondary have enough talent and experience to carry the Boilermakers, who will probably mix up their schemes throughout the season. Led by Shavers, the running game should guide the offense. The return game is expected to produce more big plays.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Lack of depth on the offensive line and linebacker might hold back the Boilermakers. Hope also insists on playing multiple quarterbacks, and he has three with experience to choose from. Can Purdue establish continuity while playing more than one quarterback?

OFFENSE

For the first time since 2009 — coach Danny Hope's first season — the Boilermakers are prepared to start a season with healthy quarterbacks.

Caleb TerBush, who started all 13 games in 2011, returns along with Robert Marve and Rob Henry. Henry missed last season following a knee injury, but he's expected to be in the mix.

The injury bug, however, has impacted the backfield. Leading rusher Ralph Bolden, who suffered a torn ACL in the regular season finale at Indiana, didn't participate in spring drills, and his status for the season is uncertain.

But Purdue welcomes back Akeem Shavers, named MVP in the team's Little Caesars Pizza Bowl victory over Western Michigan. Shavers rushed for 149 yards in the Boilermakers' first postseason win since 2007.

The line has enough experience to be effective, but it lacks depth. Antavian Edison had the most receiving yards last season, but the status of junior wideout O.J. Ross was questionable at the end of spring because of academics.

DEFENSE

The big change is the addition of three new coaches, led by coordinator and linebackers coach Tim Tibesar, who replaced Gary Emanuel. Greg Burns (secondary) and Kevin Wolthausen (defensive line) are also new.

The new coaches inherit a solid defensive front, led by an All-America candidate at tackle in Kawann Short, who flirted with submitting his name to the NFL Draft. Using quickness inside, he led Purdue in tackles for loss (17) and sacks (6.5) last season.

Also up front is Bruce Gaston, coming off a solid season as a sophomore, and end Ryan Russell, an up-and-coming talent.

In a skilled secondary, the talent and experience of cornerbacks Ricardo Allen and Josh Johnson are major strengths for the Boilermakers. Joining those two in the secondary are Taylor Richards, Frankie Williams, Max Charlot and Normando Harris. Richards, Harris and Charlot played last season, while Williams redshirted.

The area of concern is linebacker. Middle linebacker Dwayne Beckford didn't participate in spring practice after being suspended for the bowl game. He hadn't been reinstated as of early May. The position lacks depth, forcing Hope to move junior quarterback Sean Robinson to linebacker prior to start of spring practice.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Cody Webster returns after averaging 42.9 yards per kick; he is poised to handle the duties for a third straight season. The Boilermakers, though, lose kicker Carson Wiggs. Two freshmen will battle to handle the duties: Paul Griggs and Thomas Meadows.

The biggest strength of special teams is Raheem Mostert and the kickoff return game, which led the nation at 28.7 yards per attempt.

OVERVIEW

Coming off a strong finish to the 2011 season, the seasoned Boilermakers look to ride the momentum into Hope's fourth season. The schedule is favorable, with Leaders Division opponents Wisconsin, Penn State and Indiana at home. With Ohio State ineligible for the conference title game, Purdue looks like a reasonable darkhorse in the league.

TOP NEWCOMER

CB/S Frankie Williams — The Florida native redshirted last season and is now ready to make a big impact. Williams is expected to be in the rotation in the secondary, working a majority of the time at cornerback. He also looks to be the team's top punt returner.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**19**	**Caleb TerBush***	**6-5**	**225**	**Sr.**
RB	24	Akeem Shavers	5-11	203	Sr.
WR	**6**	**Gary Bush***	**6-0**	**175**	**Jr.**
WR	8	Raheem Mostert	5-11	180	So.
WR	**13**	**Antavian Edison***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**
TE	**86**	**Gabe Holmes***	**6-5**	**247**	**Jr.**
LT	**78**	**Trevor Foy***	**6-7**	**287**	**Jr.**
LG	**67**	**Peters Drey***	**6-6**	**310**	**Sr.**
C	**76**	**Rick Schmeig***	**6-3**	**320**	**Sr.**
RG	64	Kevin Pamphile	6-5	241	Jr.
RT	51	Justin Kitchens	6-4	275	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**99**	**Ryan Russell***	**6-5**	**264**	**So.**
DT	**93**	**Kawann Short***	**6-3**	**310**	**Sr.**
DT	**90**	**Bruce Gaston***	**6-2**	**303**	**Jr.**
DE	58	Robert Maci	6-4	241	Sr.
LB	**45**	**Will Lucas***	**5-11**	**226**	**Jr.**
LB	**3**	**Dwayne Beckford***	**6-1**	**228**	**Sr.**
LB	38	Mike Lee	6-2	220	So.
CB	**21**	**Ricardo Allen***	**5-9**	**176**	**Jr.**
CB	**28**	**Josh Johnson***	**5-11**	**195**	**Sr.**
SS	34	Max Charlot	6-0	190	Sr.
FS	4	Taylor Richards	5-10	180	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Paul Griggs	6-0	190	Fr.
P	**42**	**Cody Webster***	**6-1**	**205**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 8	at Notre Dame
Sept. 15	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 29	MARSHALL
Oct. 6	MICHIGAN
Oct. 13	WISCONSIN
Oct. 20	at Ohio State
Oct. 27	at Minnesota
Nov. 3	PENN STATE
Nov. 10	at Iowa
Nov. 17	at Illinois
Nov. 24	INDIANA

2011 RESULTS

W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE	27-24
L	at Rice	22-24
W	SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE	59-0
L	NOTRE DAME	10-38
W	MINNESOTA	45-17
L	at Penn State	18-23
W	ILLINOIS	21-14
L	at Michigan	14-36
L	at Wisconsin	17-62
W	OHIO STATE (OT)	26-23
L	IOWA	21-31
W	at Indiana	33-25
	Little Caesars Bowl	
W	vs. Western Michigan	37-32

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.9	60
Rushing	181.6	33
Passing	195.2	83
Total	376.9	71

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.9	63
Rushing	174.9	82
Pass	221.0	53
Total	395.9	73

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

55 NORTHWESTERN | WILDCATS

Big Ten rank: 9 Record: 6-7 Big Ten record: 3-5 (5th, Legends) Stadium: Ryan Field (47,130)

Photo by Jerry Lai-US PRESSWIRE

"This is as deep a group as we've ever had. There's no question about that." — Coach Pat Fitzgerald, on his wide receiver corps

WILDCATS at a GLANCE

COACH: Pat Fitzgerald — At Northwestern: 40-36, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mick McCall
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Hankwitz

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 5 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kain Colter, WR Tony Jones, LG Brian Mulroe, DE Tyler Scott, DE Quentin Williams, DT Brian Arnfelt, MLB David Nwabuisi, S Ibraheim Campbell

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Wildcats are blessed with size, speed and depth at receiver, which will give Colter plenty of options and not force him to scramble so frequently. Mulroe leads a veteran offensive line. The defensive line could be the best at NU in several years, and there is a load of speed and experience at linebacker.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The young secondary returns just one starter and the three new guys have one start between them. With the exception of return savant Venric Mark, the special teams are below average. The running game doesn't have a bell cow, though Treyvon Green and Mike Trumpy and incoming freshman Malin Jones could develop into such.

OFFENSE

Junior quarterback Kain Colter takes over as the full-time leader after serving as insurance for Dan Persa last season.

Colter, a remarkable athlete who started the first three games, rushed for a team-high 654 yards, threw for 673 yards and caught 43 passes for 466 yards.

Colter liked to scramble after going through just one or two progressions, but he spent the offseason learning to think pass-first. That's good advice because the Wildcats' spread attack is loaded with receivers.

Starting wideouts Demetrius Fields and Christian Jones have shifted to slot receiver — the place where Jeremy Ebert earned first-team All-Big Ten honors — while speedster Tony Jones leads a young and talented group on the perimeter.

Junior running back Mike Trumpy, who missed the final nine games of last season after tearing his ACL, will team up with sophomore Treyvon Green (362 yards, four touchdowns). Freshman Malin Jones will have a say as well.

The offensive line lost two four-year starters from a unit that surrendered 42 sacks last season.

Senior Patrick Ward, a two-year starter at right tackle, flips to left tackle to replace the graduated Al Netter. Ward, senior left guard Brian Mulroe and sophomore center Brandon Vitabile should be competent, but the right side is in flux.

DEFENSE

The Wildcats were awful during the team's five-game losing streak at midseason, but they showed marked improvement during the final five games as defensive end Quentin Williams, safety Ibraheim Campbell and linebacker David Nwabuisi helped to lead the way.

Alas, Northwestern welcomes back just two other starters in addition to the three listed above, so there's still has a long way to go to become a middle-of-the-pack Big Ten defense.

Campbell is the only returnee in the secondary as the three newbies have one career start under their collective belt. The Wildcats really like redshirt freshman corner Nick VanHoose.

Williams (three sacks) leads a potentially above-average line, as big things are expected of senior defensive tackle Brian Arnfelt (who missed most of last season with a broken foot) and junior Tyler Scott (who started the first six games before injuring his shoulder).

Nwabuisi (8.5 tackles for loss), sophomores Chi Chi Ariguzo and Collin Ellis, and junior Damien Proby give the Wildcats four proven options at linebacker.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Electrifying junior Venric Mark enabled Northwestern to rank second nationally in punt returns last year (15.9 average), and he's fine on kick returns as well.

Junior punter Brandon Williams (40.8-yard average) has been solid for the past two seasons, but junior kicker Jeff Budzien hasn't stepped forward. He tried just 10 field goals last year and was 1 of 4 on kicks of 45-plus yards.

OVERVIEW

There are questions at several positions, but many of the potential answers hail from the recent recruiting classes that have been well-regarded. If these inexperienced Wildcats are ready for their turn, then they ought to deliver the program's fifth bowl bid in a row.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Malin Jones: He was the first player at fabled Joliet Catholic Academy to deliver three 1,000-yard seasons. He rushed 195 times for 1,681 yards as a senior and has terrific pass-catching skills, projecting as the complete package for NU's spread offense.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	2	Kain Colter	6-0	190	Jr.
RB	22	Treyvon Green	5-10	215	So.
WR	17	Rashad Lawrence	6-2	185	Jr.
WR	6	Tony Jones	6-0	185	So.
SR	**8**	**Demetrius Fields***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
SR	**14**	**Christian Jones***	**6-3**	**225**	**So.**
LT	**70**	**Patrick Ward***	**6-7**	**310**	**Sr.**
LG	**72**	**Brian Mulroe***	**6-4**	**295**	**Sr.**
C	**66**	**Brandon Vitabile***	**6-3**	**300**	**So.**
RG	79	Neal Deiters	6-8	315	Sr.
RT	74	Chuck Porcelli	6-7	315	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**97**	**Tyler Scott***	**6-4**	**265**	**Jr.**
DT	91	Brian Arnfelt	6-5	300	Sr.
DT	92	Will Hampton	6-3	285	Jr.
DE	**88**	**Quentin Williams***	**6-4**	**255**	**Sr.**
LB	**45**	**Collin Ellis***	**6-2**	**225**	**So.**
LB	**33**	**David Nwabuisi***	**6-1**	**240**	**Sr.**
LB	44	Chi Chi Ariguzo	6-3	220	So.
CB	23	Nick VanHoose	6-0	185	Fr.
CB	15	Daniel Jones	5-11	170	So.
S	**24**	**Ibraheim Campbell***	**5-11**	**205**	**So.**
S	16	Davion Fleming	5-10	200	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**37**	**Jeff Budzien***	**5-11**	**165**	**Jr.**
P	**49**	**Brandon Williams***	**6-2**	**185**	**Jr.**

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Syracuse
Sept. 8	VANDERBILT
Sept. 15	BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 22	SOUTH DAKOTA
Sept. 29	INDIANA
Oct. 6	at Penn State
Oct. 13	at Minnesota
Oct. 20	NEBRASKA
Oct. 27	IOWA
Nov. 10	at Michigan
Nov. 17	at Michigan State
Nov. 24	ILLINOIS

2011 RESULTS

W	at Boston College	24-17
W	EASTERN ILLINOIS	42-21
L	at Army	14-21
L	at Illinois	35-38
L	MICHIGAN	24-42
L	at Iowa	31-41
L	PENN STATE	24-34
W	at Indiana	59-38
W	at Nebraska	28-25
W	RICE	28-6
W	MINNESOTA	28-13
L	MICHIGAN STATE	17-31
	Meineke Car Care Bowl	
L	vs. Texas A&M	22-33

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.9	51
Rushing	166.6	45
Passing	254.2	38
Total	420.9	34
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Rushing	177.3	84
Passing	230.4	71
Total	407.7	80
Scoring	27.7	66
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+3	+0.23	40

RANKING

62 ILLINOIS | FIGHTING ILLINI

Big Ten rank: 10 Record: 7-6 Big Ten record: 2-6 (5th Leaders) Stadium: Memorial Stadium (62,870)

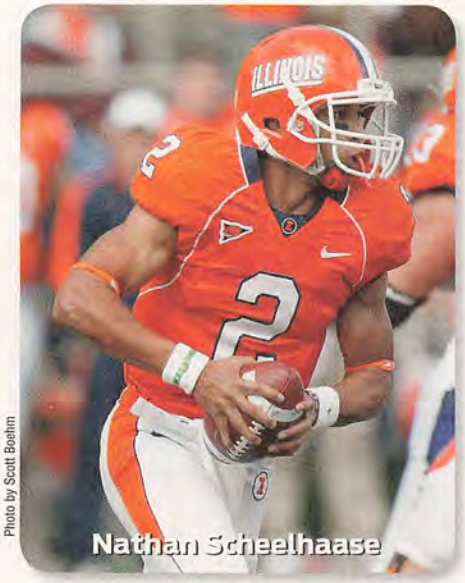


Photo by Scott Boehm

"These players have bought in. It has been a privilege to coach 'em."
— Coach Tim Beckman

FIGHTING ILLINI at a GLANCE

COACH: Tim Beckman — At Illinois: 1st year
OVERALL: 21-16, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Billy Gonzales and Chris Beatty
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Banks

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Nathan Scheelhaase, RB Josh Ferguson, WR Darius Millines, C Graham Pocic, MLB Jonathan Brown, CB/WR Terry Hawthorne, DT Akeem Spence

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Illini welcome back seven starters — including several elite athletes — from the defense that ranked seventh nationally in total yards allowed. Scheelhaase, a consummate leader, has 26 consecutive starts under his belt. Ferguson, a scatback, looks like a perfect fit for the spread.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There are question marks and depth issues on the offensive line that require some youngsters to step forward immediately. The special teams were the worst in the nation last year, so there's a long way to go to become mediocre. The Illini need somebody (Millines?) to become a go-to receiver.

OFFENSE

Tim Beckman plans to run the spread attack that helped Toledo rank among the nation's top 10 teams in points (42.2 per game) and yards (481.3 per game) last season, but he's not going to short-change his players' strengths to do it.

Considering junior quarterback Nathan Scheelhaase might be more dangerous as a runner than a thrower — he owns 1,492 rushing yards and 3,935 passing yards in 26 career starts — and the fact Illinois is short on proven receivers, this shouldn't be a team that chucks the ball all over Memorial Stadium.

Redshirt freshman scatback Josh Ferguson and powerhouse sophomore Donovonn Young are complementary running backs. Ferguson, an excellent receiver, delivered 150 rushing yards in the spring game.

Junior Darius Millines (19 catches, 218 yards) is the best hope as a breakout performer among the wideouts, but he missed the spring with a foot injury. Juniors Spencer Harris (26 catches, 226 yards) and Ryan Lankford (12 catches, 108 yards) are the only other relatively proven guys. Tight ends Jon Davis and Evan Wilson are good targets, too.

The line offers more worries about depth and experience. Senior center Graham Pocic (26 career starts) and senior left guard Hugh Thornton (25 starts) are the vets, but one might move to tackle to address a position led by two sophomores and two redshirt freshmen.

DEFENSE

Former Cincinnati coordinator Tim Banks inherits seven starters from a defense that finished seventh nationally in total yards allowed.

Senior defensive end Michael Buchanan, who stacked up 7.5 sacks and 13.5 tackles for loss in first-round pick Whitney Mercilus' shadow last season, came to the fore during the spring when he earned the team's Defensive MVP honors.

"Sometimes he doesn't realize how good he can be," Beckman said.

Junior nose Akeem Spence is another veteran with All-Big Ten potential, while returning tackle Glenn Foster bulked up to nearly 300 pounds.

Junior Jonathan Brown shifts from weakside linebacker into the middle with hopes he can improve on last season's 108 stops and 19.5 tackles for loss.

The solid secondary features four veterans in senior cornerbacks Terry Hawthorne and Justin Green, senior free safety Supo Sanni and junior strong safety Steve Hull. Hawthorne led the pack with three interceptions and eight pass breakups.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Illinois ranked last nationally a year ago in kick returns and second-to-last in punt returns, so there's endless room for improvement. Walk-ons Taylor Zalewski and Nick Immekus are battling to replace standout kicker Derek Dimke. Sophomore punter Justin DuVernois (38.3-yard average) showed marked improvement in the spring.

OVERVIEW

Beckman inherits this program at an intriguing time. Though Illinois has won bowl games two years in a row for the first time, there's an overall wariness about the program's prospects due to the six consecutive losses to end the 2011 regular season and the lack of depth in 2012. Nonetheless, the friendly home schedule suggests the Illini can be bowl-bound again.

TOP NEWCOMER

OLB Ta'Jarvis Fuller: The early enrollee piled up 166 tackles, including six sacks, five forced fumbles and two interceptions for Dunbar High School in Fort Myers, Fla. He jumped onto the two-deep during spring ball at the "STAR" position, a linebacker/safety hybrid, and delivered two tackles for loss and two pass breakups during the spring game.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	2	**Nathan Scheelhaase***	6-3	195	Jr.
TB	6	Josh Ferguson	5-10	180	Fr.
WR	15	**Darius Millines***	5-11	185	Jr.
WR	80	**Spencer Harris***	6-3	195	Jr.
WR	12	Ryan Lankford	6-0	175	Jr.
TE	3	Jon Davis	6-3	230	So.
LT	68	Simon Cvijanovic	6-5	285	So.
LG	72	**Hugh Thornton***	6-5	310	Sr.
C	76	**Graham Pocic***	6-7	305	Sr.
RG	61	Tyler Sands	6-5	305	Sr.
RT	74	**Michael Heitz***	6-5	295	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	54	Justin Staples	6-4	235	Sr.
NT	94	**Akeem Spence***	6-1	305	Jr.
DT	47	**Glenn Foster***	6-4	260	Sr.
DE	99	**Michael Buchanan***	6-6	240	Sr.
LB	30	Houston Bates	6-3	240	So.
LB	45	**Jonathan Brown***	6-1	235	Jr.
STAR	25	Ashante Williams	5-11	205	Sr.
CB	26	Justin Green	5-11	195	Sr.
CB	1	**Terry Hawthorne***	6-0	190	Sr.
SS	5	**Steve Hull***	6-2	200	Jr.
FS	7	**Supo Sanni***	6-3	220	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	26	Taylor Zalewski	6-3	200	Fr.
P	18	**Justin DuVernois***	6-1	190	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8	at Arizona State
Sept. 15	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 22	LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 29	PENN STATE
Oct. 6	at Wisconsin
Oct. 13	at Michigan
Oct. 27	INDIANA
Nov. 3	at Ohio State
Nov. 10	MINNESOTA
Nov. 17	PURDUE
Nov. 24	at Northwestern

2011 RESULTS

W	ARKANSAS STATE	33-15
W	SOUTH DAKOTA STATE	56-3
W	ARIZONA STATE	17-14
W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	23-20
W	NORTHWESTERN	38-35
W	at Indiana	41-20
L	OHIO STATE	7-17
L	at Purdue	14-21
L	at Penn State	7-10
L	MICHIGAN	14-31
L	WISCONSIN	17-28
L	at Minnesota	7-27
	Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl	
W	vs. UCLA	20-14

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.6	91
Rushing	171.7	41
Passing	184.0	91
Total	355.7	85
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.6	15
Rushing	123.9	26
Pass	162.3	3
Total	286.2	7
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-6	-0.46	95

RANKING

74 MINNESOTA | GOPHERS

Big Ten rank: 11 Record: 3-9 Big Ten record: 2-6 (6th, Legends) Stadium: TCF Bank Stadium (50,805)

Photo by Scott Boehm

MarQueis Gray

"We've got a quarterback. We've got to get everybody else to step it up around him."

— Coach Jerry Kill

GOPHERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Jerry Kill — At Minnesota: 3-9, 1 year;
OVERALL: 130-82, 18 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Limegrover
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tracy Claeys

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1967, co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2008, Insight
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB MarQueis Gray, RB James Gillum, SR Marcus Jones, DT Ra'Shede Hageman, LB Mike Rallis, CB Michael Carter, CB/RET Troy Stoudermire

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Gray appears ready to have a breakthrough after a season learning a new system. He is a threat both throwing and running. The Gophers have found some defensive linemen, anchored by tackle Ra'Shede Hageman. An experienced cornerback situation, keyed by Stoudermire, is another promising starting point.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Gophers have a lot of speed at the receiver position, but it's young. Only one receiver has caught a touchdown pass. On defense, the Gophers missed far too many tackles last season.

OFFENSE

Quarterback MarQueis Gray doesn't like what he sees when he watches film of himself from last season. Too many open receivers missed; too many turnovers.

"I can see why everybody was second-guessing me," he said.

That could change this season. Gray improved at the end of last year and had a very strong spring. Now, as a more mature senior — and the doting father of two kids — he is poised to have a big year.

Only one problem: Who is going to catch his passes?

Brandon Green is the only receiver with a touchdown on his resume. The rest of the receivers are fast and high on potential, but low on experience. Offensive coordinator Matt Limegrover sees bigger roles for speedy sophomore receivers Marcus Jones (who is coming off ACL surgery) and Devin Crawford-Tufts.

Junior college transfer James Gillum should get the bulk of the carries.

But until somebody else steps up, all eyes will be on Gray, a 245-pound dual threat who ran for nearly 1,000 yards last season while throwing for 1,495. His goal is to complete 60 percent of his passes, which is a giant leap from his 50.7 percent completion rating a year ago.

Gray should get help from an offensive line that, while young, has experience.

DEFENSE

The Gophers ranked low in the national stats in just about every defensive category last season. The coaches believe the biggest reason was a lack of tackling.

"We're trying to eliminate that step-slow problem," said coordinator Tracy Claeys.

The Gophers are stressing speed over size. As a result, Mike Rallis moves to the middle from outside linebacker. James Manuel has switched from safety to linebacker. Some of the fastest newcomers in the defensive backfield have been installed at safety, a key spot in Claey's system.

Sure things? There aren't many, but Ra'Shede Hageman has found a home at defensive tackle, where he can dominate. The Gophers have experience at cornerback, thanks mainly to Troy Stoudermire getting an extra year of competition.

The bottom line is Minnesota is hoping for better tackling by getting the right guys in better position to make those stops.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Stoudermire returns as the Big Ten career kickoff return leader, and Marcus Jones should provide big-play potential as a punt returner.

Jordan Wettstein finished strong last season after winning the kicking duties, making all six field-goal attempts, including a 51-yarder vs. Illinois. The Gophers need a big jump in the punting game, which is why Dan Orseske (11th in the conference the past two years) likely will be replaced by walk-on Peter Mortell.

OVERVIEW

Coach Jerry Kill is healthier this year, and so is his team. Things have been much smoother in Year Two of his reign. This is a very young Gophers team, however. There is speed and talent, but an utter lack of experience. Hence there are modest goals: A better non-conference record and vying for a lower-tier bowl game.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB James Gillum: Talk about filling a void. Joining a team with a running back group that has been beset with injuries and lacking experience, Gillum could wind up as the biggest offseason jolt for the Gophers. He rushed for 2,339 yards in two seasons at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**5**	**MarQueis Gray***	**6-4**	**245**	**Sr.**
TB	21	James Gillum	5-11	204	Jr.
WR	**1**	**Brandon Green***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
WR	80	Devin Crawford-Tufts	6-2	195	So.
SR	15	Marcus Jones	5-8	170	So.
TE	**81**	**John Rabe***	**6-4**	**255**	**Sr.**
LT	**58**	**Ed Olson Jr.***	**6-7**	**305**	**Jr.**
LG	**53**	**Tommy Olson***	**6-4**	**295**	**So.**
C	62	Zach Mottla	6-2	190	Jr.
RG	**52**	**Zac Epping***	**6-2**	**310**	**So.**
RT	**76**	**Jimmy Gjere***	**6-7**	**325**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**98**	**Michael Amaefula***	**6-2**	**245**	**So.**
DT	99	Ra'Shede Hageman	6-6	300	Jr.
DT	46	Cameron Botticelli	6-5	280	So.
DE	55	Thieren Cockran	6-6	235	Fr.
LB	**4**	**Keanon Cooper***	**6-0**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	**26**	**Mike Rallis***	**6-2**	**245**	**Sr.**
LB	**24**	**James Manuel***	**6-2**	**215**	**Jr.**
CB	6	Michael Carter	5-11	185	Sr.
CB	**11**	**Troy Stoudermire***	**5-10**	**200**	**Sr.**
SS	**21**	**Brock Vereen***	**6-0**	**195**	**Jr.**
FS	13	Derrick Wells	6-0	205	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**39**	**Jordan Wettstein***	**5-11**	**185**	**Sr.**
P	37	Peter Mortell	6-2	200	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at UNLV
Sept. 8	NEW HAMPSHIRE
Sept. 15	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 22	SYRACUSE
Sept. 29	at Iowa
Oct. 13	NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 20	at Wisconsin
Oct. 27	PURDUE
Nov. 3	MICHIGAN
Nov. 10	at Illinois
Nov. 17	at Nebraska
Nov. 24	MICHIGAN STATE

2011 RESULTS

L	at USC	17-19
L	NEW MEXICO STATE	21-28
W	MIAMI (OH)	29-23
L	NORTH DAKOTA STATE	24-37
L	at Michigan	0-58
L	at Purdue	17-45
L	NEBRASKA	14-41
W	IOWA	22-21
L	at Michigan State	24-31
L	WISCONSIN	13-42
L	at Northwestern	13-28
W	ILLINOIS	27-7

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.4	111
Rushing	160.0	56
Passing	150.3	109
Total	310.3	110
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.7	93
Rushing	186.4	91
Pass	216.7	49
Total	403.1	77
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.67	100

RANKING

87 INDIANA | HOOSIERS

Big Ten rank: 12 Record: 1-11 Big Ten record: 0-8 (6th, Leaders) Stadium: Memorial Stadium (52, 929)

Stephen Houston

Photo by Michael Hickey-US PRESSWIRE

"It's not climbing Mount Everest. I wouldn't be here if I didn't firmly believe we can get this done."
— Coach Kevin Wilson

HOOSIERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Kevin Wilson — At Indiana and overall: 1-11, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Seth Littrell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Doug Mallory, Mike Eleker

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1967, co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2007, Insight
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tre Roberson, RB Stephen Houston, WR Kofi Hughes, C Will Matte, DT Adam Replogle, DT Larry Black Jr., LB David Cooper, S Mark Murphy

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: IU should score capably against most foes, providing the line performs adequately after graduating both tackles. Roberson proved to be a precocious dual-threat quarterback as a true freshman. Houston looked like a Big Ten back. The receiving corps remains capable. The defensive tackle position is strong, experienced and deep.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Indiana's defense was horrid last season and remains a huge question mark. The young Hoosiers mounted almost no pass rush, couldn't disguise their blitzes, didn't tackle well, blew assignments galore and were slow. The infusion of junior college transfers might help, as may a few true freshmen, but probably not enough. There is no established punter.

OFFENSE

New coordinator Seth Littrell, a Mike Leach disciple, arrived from Arizona with the intent of upgrading Indiana's passing game. Arizona completed more passes (398) than IU even attempted (378) last season.

Tre Roberson, the first true freshman to start at quarterback in Indiana history, took the helm for five games last fall and finished with 937 yards passing and 426 rushing.

But junior college transfer Cameron Coffman got some first-unit snaps during spring practice, and touted incoming freshman Nate Sudfeld, a 6-5 Californian (who originally committed to Arizona), could challenge for the job.

IU will have a potent receiving corps out of the spread. Multi-talented Kofi Hughes makes plays. Cody Latimer and Jamonne Chester are rangy athletes with starting experience. Shane Wynn is a speedy slot. Duwyce Wilson, who missed the spring while recovering from knee surgery, is potentially the best of the bunch.

Stephen Houston emerged to average 5.3 yards on 151 carries last fall from IU's one-back sets. D'Angelo Roberts, shifty and tough, and Isaiah Roundtree, a swift Morehead State transfer who had a spectacular spring game, are the backups. Watch for incoming frosh Tevin Coleman.

Offensive line coach Greg Frye worked wonders last season, forging a functional unit while deploying several freshmen (including starters Bernard Taylor and Collin Rahrig at guard). Will Matte is entering his fourth season as the starting center.

DEFENSE

Indiana trailed all its Big Ten brethren in scoring defense (37.3 points per game) and total defense (458.7 yards per game) by significant margins.

Senior defensive tackles Larry Black Jr. and Adam Replogle are four-year starters. They shared the team lead with 14.5 tackles for loss last season and are ably backed by Nick Sliger. But at virtually every other defensive spot, the Hoosiers are searching for better.

Bobby Richardson and Ryan Phillis got lots of starts at end, but they need to provide more pass rush. IU plays a lot of nickel, but junior college linebackers David Cooper and Jacarri Alexander could start alongside returnee Chase Hoobler when the Hoosiers are in their 4-3. The secondary, full of freshmen last season, was a disaster most of the time.

Lawrence Barnett is the closest IU gets to a lockdown corner. Mark Murphy showed some moxie as a true freshman safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Mitch Ewald is Indiana's career field goal percentage leader heading into his junior season (29 of 35, 82.9 percent). The coaches are hoping he can add some length to his kickoffs. Wynn and Hughes are experienced, capable return men.

OVERVIEW

Kevin Wilson could hardly have had a more deflating debut as a head coach. IU was the only team from a BCS automatic qualifying conference that failed to post a win over any FBS foe last fall. But no team played as many true freshmen and redshirt freshmen (32) as IU did, either. With all that youth, the Hoosiers can really only go in one direction, up.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB David Cooper: The mid-year junior college transfer stepped into a starting linebacker job in the spring and is one of six JC imports ticketed for work on a needy defense. Assistant coach Mark Hagan said Cooper and JC transfer linebacker Jacarri Alexander "bring instincts, speed, athleticism, physicality, some swagger."

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	5	**Tre Roberson***	6-0	183	So.
RB	12	**Stephen Houston***	6-0	222	Jr.
WR	13	**Kofi Hughes***	6-2	211	Jr.
WR	3	Cody Latimer	6-3	208	So.
SL	1	Shane Wynn	5-7	156	So.
TE	83	Ted Bolser	6-6	255	Jr.
LT	74	Charlie Chapman	6-6	308	Jr.
LG	73	**Bernard Taylor***	6-2	291	So.
C	60	**Will Matte***	6-2	290	Sr.
RG	64	**Collin Rahrig***	6-2	263	So.
RT	59	Peyton Eckert	6-6	292	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	95	**Bobby Richardson***	6-3	274	So.
DT	98	**Adam Replogle***	6-3	289	Sr.
DT	97	**Larry Black Jr.***	6-2	310	Sr.
DE	25	**Ryan Phillis***	6-3	262	So.
LB	47	**Chase Hoobler***	6-2	240	So.
LB	42	David Cooper	6-1	232	So.
LB	34	Jacarri Alexander	6-1	231	Jr.
CB	23	**Lawrence Barnett***	5-10	194	Jr.
CB	9	**Greg Heban***	6-1	185	Jr.
SS	27	Alexander Webb	6-0	189	Sr.
FS	37	**Mark Murphy***	6-2	211	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	16	**Mitch Ewald***	5-10	174	Jr.
P	9	Mitchell Voss	5-11	182	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	INDIANA STATE
Sept. 8	vs. Massachusetts (Boston)
Sept. 15	BALL STATE
Sept. 29	at Northwestern
Oct. 6	MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 13	OHIO STATE
Oct. 20	at Navy
Oct. 27	at Illinois
Nov. 3	IOWA
Nov. 10	WISCONSIN
Nov. 17	at Penn State
Nov. 24	at Purdue

2011 RESULTS

L	at Ball State	20-27
L	VIRGINIA	31-34
W	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	38-21
L	at North Texas	21-24
L	PENN STATE	10-16
L	ILLINOIS	20-41
L	at Wisconsin	7-59
L	at Iowa	24-45
L	NORTHWESTERN	38-59
L	at Ohio State	20-34
L	at Michigan State	3-55
L	PURDUE	25-33

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.4	101
Rushing	161.0	53
Passing	199.4	80
Total	360.4	83
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	37.3	114
Rushing	243.7	118
Pass	215.0	47
Total	458.7	109
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-2	-0.17	78

PICKING **THE BIG 12**

Oklahoma is loaded with return of QB, D-coordinator

Landry Jones is back. So is Mike Stoops.

The return of Oklahoma's record-setting quarterback for his senior year, and the return of the Sooners' former defensive coordinator from 7 1/2 years as head coach at Arizona, makes OU the favorite to win Bob Stoops' eighth Big 12 championship.

Mike Stoops replaces Brent Venables, but now someone must replace two-time All-American receiver Ryan Broyles. The Sooners' receiver corps is wildly talented, the offensive line is virtually intact, the backfield is intriguing, and the defense — so vulnerable to the big play in a disappointing 10-3 season — has seven starters back.

The two Big 12 newcomers — West Virginia and TCU — hope to challenge Oklahoma.

The Mountaineers won the Big East last season in their first year under Dana Holgorsen, then throttled Clemson 70-33 in the Orange Bowl as quarterback Geno Smith passed for 407 yards and six touchdowns.

Smith, his top three receivers, top runner and most of his offensive line are back. So are seven starters on defense, which is now coordinated by long-time Oklahoma State assistant Joe DeForest.

The Horned Frogs, after winning a third consecutive Mountain West crown, finally feel at home. Gary Patterson, 109-30 in 11 seasons, is confident his team can challenge for a Big 12 crown. Cagey quarterback Casey Pachall, who broke many of Andy Dalton's season records, returns with a loaded backfield, both starting wideouts and the usual cast of overachievers on defense, including sack-master Stansly Maponga.

Oklahoma State is coming off its best season ever — its first 12-win season, its first Big 12 championship and its first BCS bowl. The Cowboys also produced two first-round draft picks in wide receiver Justin Blackmon and quarterback Brandon Weeden.

Mike Gundy begins rebuilding with a true freshman (Wes Lunt) at quarterback and a posse of unknown receivers, but there is hope for continued success as 16 starters are back for a team that has 41 victories in the past four seasons (seventh nationally).

Texas has its usually fearsome defense, with playmakers (end Alex Okafor, cornerback Carrington Byndom and safety Kenny Vaccaro) inside and out. The offense, however, remains problematic.

If the Longhorns are going to continue their bounce-back (from 5-7 in 2010 to 8-5 last year), Mack Brown's 15th season will have to have better quarterback play from either David Ash, Case McCoy or both. Last year that duo combined for 11 touchdowns and 12 interceptions.

Kansas State's 10-3 resurgence in 2011 under Bill Snyder was surprising — but not really.

Snyder wins with junior college transfers, and of the bunch he had last

Big 12 Picks

	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Oklahoma	Fans get their wish with the return of defensive coordinator Mike Stoops.	The defensive tackle position has experience but remains limited in ability.	With QB Landry Jones and a loaded arsenal, OU is the Big 12 favorite.
2. West Virgnia	Savvy QB Geno Smith leads arguably the nation's most prolific offense.	The Mountaineers will fly 4,167 miles for Big 12 games this year ... and 4,838 next year.	Football-wise, WVU is perfect for the Big 12 ... maybe perfect enough to win it.
3. TCU	QB Casey Pachall never met a deficit he couldn't overcome.	After years of beating up on the WAC, C-USA and MWC, it's Big 12 time.	The Frogs show they're more than just pesky to the BCS establishment.
4. Oklahoma State	Sixteen starters return for a team that won 41 games in the last four years.	Justin Blackmon and Brandon Weeden, the best combo in school history, are gone.	Cowboys are back in the saddle if QB Wes Lunt doesn't play like a true freshman.
5. Texas	Old school? The defense is stout, and the running game could dominate.	Even through last season and all spring, Horns didn't identify a starting QB.	Love the D, and have to figure that UT will begin to decipher that QB puzzle.
6. Kansas State	QB Collin Klein hits harder and is tougher than most college linebackers.	The forward pass isn't a priority, and the defense lacks major-college experience.	If newcomers step up on the offensive and defensive lines, another 10-win season.
7. Texas Tech	QB Seth Doege could guide Tommy Tuberville's best overall offense.	The defense couldn't stop a spitball fight last season.	New D-coordinator Art Kaufman has restructured things, but it'll take time.
8. Baylor	Though RG3, Terrance Ganaway and Kendall Wright are gone, the cupboard isn't bare.	QB Nick Florence almost sounds cocky with his post-Griffin championship chatter.	Florence has tools around him, but not enough to sustain last year's momentum.
9. Iowa State	Either Steele Jantz or Jared Barnett will be the QB. Both look like winners.	New starters at two DB positions and three DL positions make the defense shaky.	If one QB plays well enough to win the job, the Cyclones might get to a bowl.
10. Kansas	Charlie Weis has instilled an entirely new attitude throughout the program.	The defense ranked 120th in FBS. The offense ranked 106th. Any questions?	Even with an influx of transfers, Weis will need 3-4 years to turn things around.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-BIG 12 Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Landry Jones	Sr.	Oklahoma
RB	Joseph Randle	Jr.	Oklahoma State
RB	Malcolm Brown	So.	Texas
WR	Kenny Stills	Jr.	Oklahoma
WR	Tavon Austin	Sr.	West Virginia
WR	Terrance Williams	Sr.	Baylor
C	Ben Habern	Sr.	Oklahoma
OL	Lane Taylor	Sr.	Oklahoma State
OL	Gabe Ikard	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Blaize Foltz	Sr.	TCU
OL	LaAdrian Waddle	Sr.	Texas Tech
AP	Justin Gilbert	Jr.	Oklahoma State
K	Quinn Sharp	Sr.	Oklahoma State

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Alex Okafor	Sr.	Texas
DL	Stansly Maponga	Jr.	TCU
DL	Jackson Jeffcoat	Jr.	Texas
DL	Toben Opurum	Sr.	Kansas
LB	A.J. Klein	Sr.	Iowa State
LB	Arthur Brown	Sr.	Kansas State
LB	Jake Knott	Sr.	Iowa State
DB	Tony Jefferson	Jr.	Oklahoma
DB	Nigel Malone	Sr.	Kansas State
DB	Kenny Vaccaro	Sr.	Texas
DB	Brodrick Brown	Sr.	Oklahoma State
P	Quinn Sharp	Sr.	Oklahoma State

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Geno Smith	Sr.	West Virginia
RB	John Hubert	Jr.	Kansas State
RB	Dominique Whaley	Sr.	Oklahoma
WR	Josh Boyce	Jr.	TCU
WR	Stedman Bailey	Jr.	West Virginia
WR	Tevin Reese	Jr.	Baylor
C	Joe Madsen	Sr.	West Virginia
OL	Cyril Richardson	Jr.	Baylor
OL	Mason Walters	Jr.	Texas
OL	Tyler Evans	Sr.	Oklahoma
OL	Tanner Hawkinson	Sr.	Kansas
AP	Tyler Lockett	So.	Kansas State
K	Michael Hunnicutt	So.	Oklahoma

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Nigel Nicholas	Sr.	Oklahoma State
DL	David King	Sr.	Oklahoma
DL	Meshak Williams	Sr.	Kansas State
DL	Adam Davis	Sr.	Kansas State
LB	Shaun Lewis	Jr.	Oklahoma State
LB	Kenny Cain	Sr.	TCU
LB	Tom Wort	Jr.	Oklahoma
DB	Demontre Hurst	Sr.	Oklahoma
DB	Carrington Byndom	Jr.	Texas
DB	Jason Verrett	Jr.	TCU
DB	Aaron Colvin	Jr.	Oklahoma
P	Tress Way	Sr.	Oklahoma

season, 12 are back. Foremost is dual-threat quarterback Collin Klein, who rushed for 27 touchdowns and threw for 13. All-Big 12 linebacker Arthur Brown leads an underrated defense that includes all-star defensive backs Nigel Malone and Ty Zimmerman.

Texas Tech had been bowl eligible 18 years in a row and had played in 11 consecutive bowls before last year's inexplicable 5-7 meltdown. After stopping Oklahoma's 39-game home winning streak, the Red Raiders weren't competitive in their last five games, losing by an average score of 50-20.

Quarterback Seth Doege is back to lead the offense, and coach Tommy Tuberville added lots of junior college help to a defense he wants to see get tougher and smarter.

Baylor football kicked off the Year of the Bear with its best season in decades — a 10-3 record, its first victory over Oklahoma and the Heisman Trophy for quarterback Robert Griffin III. But Griffin and his top two playmakers — receiver Kendall Wright and running back Terrance Ganaway — are off to the NFL.

Art Briles will try senior quarterback Nick Florence, who has an experienced offensive line and receiver corps at his disposal. BU's defense, which held opponents to less than 30 points just twice all season, returns seven starters.

Iowa State coach Paul Rhoads has made the Cyclones competitive. Last season they played in their second bowl in three years and knocked Oklahoma State from the No. 2 spot in the polls. But consistency is a problem, starting at quarterback.

Senior Steele Jantz and sophomore Jared Barnett competed all spring and their 2011 totals (16 touchdowns, 17 interceptions) must improve. The defense returns just five starters, but that includes star linebacker tandem Jake Knott and A.J. Klein, last year's Big 12 Co-Defensive Player of the Year.

Kansas, four years removed from a 12-win Orange Bowl season, lost 10 straight after beating two FCS opponents. So Turner Gill was fired and Charlie Weis was hired. Weis landed senior transfer Dayne Crist, who played for Weis at Notre Dame. Six starters are back for a defense that ranked last (516 yards per game) among FBS programs.

— John E. Hoover

Most Valuable Player

Landry Jones
QB, Oklahoma

Offensive Player of the Year

Geno Smith
QB, West Virginia

Defensive Player of the Year

Alex Okafor
DE, Texas

Newcomer of the Year

Trey Metoyer
WR, Oklahoma

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Geno Smith	West Virginia
Strongest arm	Landry Jones	Oklahoma
Best scrambler	Jared Barnett	Iowa State
Coolest in the clutch	Casey Pachall	TCU
Toughest to bring down	Collin Klein	Kansas State
Best hands	Jaxon Shipley	Texas
Most dangerous deep threat	Stedman Bailey	West Virginia
Best pass blocker	LaAdrian Waddle	Texas Tech
Best run blocker	Lane Taylor	Oklahoma State
Best cover corner	Carrington Byndom	Texas
Best pass rusher	Stansly Maponga	TCU
Special teams demon	Justin Gilbert	Oklahoma State

THE **BIG** ONES

Sept. 1	
Oklahoma at UTEP	Not an ideal start for an OU team looking for identity.
Tulsa at Iowa State	Tulsa won 10 games or more in three of past five seasons.
Sept. 2	
SMU at Baylor	Rivalry gives early clue how good post-RG3 Baylor is.
Sept. 8	
Iowa State at Iowa	Usually entertaining and a barometer for both leagues.
Oklahoma State at Arizona	Rebuilding Wildcats want two years of payback.
Miami (Fla.) at Kansas State	Shocker at Miami last year sparked Wildcats' success.
Sept. 15	
Texas at Ole Miss	Outside of Arkansas, it's UT's first SEC trip since 1991.
Sept. 22	
Virginia at TCU	Cavaliers went 8-5 last season but were blown out in bowl.
Sept. 29	
Texas at Oklahoma State	Can OSU keep momentum of two straight over Horns?
TCU at SMU	Ponies shocked Frogs 40-33 in 2011 Iron Skillet battle.
Oct. 6	
West Virginia at Texas	Can Texas slow down or score with the Mountaineers?
Oklahoma at Texas Tech	Sooners haven't won in Lubbock since 2003.
Kansas at Kansas State	K-State outscored KU 118-28 in last two meetings.
Oct. 13	
Texas vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)	Sooners will be favored to beat UT a third straight year.
TCU at Baylor	Old (and bitter) SWC rivals, tied 50-50-7, together again.
West Virginia at Texas Tech	Mountaineers in West Texas. Just sounds weird.
Oct. 20	
Baylor at Texas	UT wants payback for back-to-back losses to Bears.
Oct. 27	
Notre Dame at Oklahoma	It's an historic series, but the Fighting Irish lead it 8-1.
Nov. 3	
TCU at West Virginia	Newest Big 12 members — and possible contenders — square off.
Nov. 10	
West Virginia at Oklahoma State	Dana Holgorsen, co-architect of OSU surge, returns.
Nov. 17	
Oklahoma at West Virginia	Two of America's most prolific quarterbacks go at it.
Nov. 24	
TCU at Texas	After 16 years, they're conference foes once again.
Oklahoma State at Oklahoma	Sooners desperate to show they're still Big Brother.
Dec. 1	
Oklahoma at TCU	By this time, Frogs will know if they belong on big stage.
Oklahoma State at Baylor	Key late-season matchup: Weeden heir vs. Griffin heir?

LANDRY JONES

Photo by Joe Robbins

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Big 12 #1	BCS (National championship game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Fiesta Bowl)
Big 12 #2	Cotton vs. SEC #3-4
Big 12 #3	Alamo vs. Pac-12 #2
Big 12 #4	Insight vs. Big Ten #4-5
Big 12 #5	Holiday vs. Pac-12 #3
Big 12 #6	Texas vs. Big Ten #6
Big 12 #7	Pinstripe vs. Big East #4

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Landry Jones	QB	Sr.	Oklahoma	Four-year starter; among most prolific QBs in history.
2. Alex Okafor	DE	Sr.	Texas	Big-play maker who reminds some of Brian Orakpo.
3. LaAdrian Waddle	OT	Sr	Texas Tech	At 6-6, 330, moves well and is a dominant pass blocker.
4. Terrance Williams	WR	Sr.	Baylor	Ex-complement to Kendall Wright set to come into his own.
5. Cyril Richardson	OT	Jr.	Baylor	A potential star in the making if he stays another year.
6. Lane Taylor	OG	Sr.	Oklahoma State	Road-grading run blocker with savvy and attitude.
7. Brodrick Brown	CB	Sr.	Oklahoma State	Superior instincts, quickness and on-ball abilities.
8. Demontre Hurst	CB	Sr	Oklahoma	A bit undersized, but excellent technique and good speed.
9. Joseph Randle	RB	Jr.	Oklahoma State	Plenty big, fast and powerful and extremely versatile.
10. Tavon Austin	WR	Sr.	West Virginia	Productive, versatile, consistent, explosive — but 5-9, 170.

By Brian Perroni | Rivals.com

BIG 12 RECRUITING

1. TEXAS: The Longhorns were again the dominant team in the conference on the recruiting trail. Texas locked up five of the top 10 prospects in its home state, including five-star running back Johnathan Gray and five-star defensive tackle Malcom Brown. Unlike in prior years, Texas also added several prospects late, such as athlete Kendall Sanders and defensive end Torshiro Davis, who were previously committed to Oklahoma State and LSU, respectively.

2. OKLAHOMA: The Sooners went much more national with recruiting and signed players from 11 different states. The jewel of the class was the same as last year, as Oklahoma finally got five-star wide receiver Trey Metoyer on campus after he spent a season at prep school. In fact, the wide receiver group as a whole was the best in the country by far. It also included four-stars Durron Neal, Sterling Shepard, Derrick Woods and Courtney Gardner.

3. TEXAS TECH: The Red Raiders went very heavy on junior college prospects in the class with nine. Though some of those transfers will likely make an earlier impact, two of the top players in the class are four-star high school receivers Dominique Wheeler and Reginald Davis. Texas Tech also picked up a rare head-to-head win against Texas when defensive end Michael Starts signed with the Red Raiders.

4. OKLAHOMA STATE: The Cowboys had a great year on the field a year ago and that should pay off in recruiting the class of 2013. However, Oklahoma State finished fairly strong in 2012. California four-star linebacker Seth Jacobs decided on signing day that he was headed to Stillwater. Oklahoma State also ended up with four-star quarterback Wes Lunt and four-star wide receiver C.J. Curry.

5. TCU: Head coach Gary Patterson has the Horned Frogs competing well on the recruiting trail headed into their first year in the Big 12. TCU signed two Army All-Americans in quarterback Tyler Matthews and punter Ethan Perry. Defensive end signee Devonte Fields had offers from most schools in the country, while tight end Griffin Gilbert shunned the Longhorns for the Horned Frogs.

6. BAYLOR: The Bears picked up two big-time Army All-American signees in defensive end Javonte Magee and linebacker Brian Nance. Both were among the top players in the country at their positions. Wide receiver Corey Coleman was perhaps the fastest prospect to sign with a Big 12 program and will be dangerous any time the ball is in his hands.

7. WEST VIRGINIA: The move to the Big 12 and head coach Dana Holgorsen's ties to the state allowed the Mountaineers to sign five prospects from the state of Texas. That number should only increase over time. The biggest signee, however, was from Maryland in four-star receiver Deontay McManus. West Virginia continued its trend of recruiting a lot of speed from the state of Florida as well.

8. KANSAS STATE: As head coach Bill Snyder is known to do, he signed several junior college players ready to step in immediately and play. Wide receiver Marquez Clark set national records at Navarro College, while defensive tackles Wesley Hollingshed and Chaquil Reed should be major parts of the rotation this year. Offensive linemen Tavon Rooks and Aderius Epps could be the steals of the class.

9. KANSAS: New head coach Charlie Weis did not have much time to put together a class after being hired, so he went heavy on junior college prospects. His biggest recruiting job, though, was convincing quarterbacks Dayne Crist and Jake Heaps to transfer from Notre Dame and BYU, respectively. Linebacker Courtney Arnick was a late find and has a chance to become a star.

10. IOWA STATE: Though the Cyclones did not sign a four-star prospect, two Texas receivers in Damien Lawry and Quan West spurned several other programs to sign with Iowa State. Florida receiver Patrick Harris makes the class of playmakers one of the better groups in the conference. Iowa State was second to Oklahoma in signing players from nine different states.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Johnathan Gray	5-11/190	RB	Aledo (Texas) High	Texas
2.	Malcom Brown	6-2/280	DT	Brenham (Texas) High	Texas
3.	Trey Metoyer	6-2/198	WR	Chatham (Va.) Hargrave Military Academy	Oklahoma
4.	Kendall Sanders	6-1/175	ATH	Athens (Texas) High	Texas
5.	Cayleb Jones	6-3/198	WR	Austin (Texas) High	Texas
6.	Durron Neal	6-1/195	WR	St. Louis (Mo.) DeSmet	Oklahoma
7.	Javonte Magee	6-5/262	DE	San Antonio (Texas) Sam Houston	Baylor
8.	Kennedy Estelle	6-7/300	OT	Pearland (Texas) Dawson	Texas
9.	Curtis Riser	6-3/283	OG	DeSoto (Texas) High	Texas
10.	Will Latu	6-5/315	OT	Santa Clarita (Calif.) College of the Canyons	Oklahoma
11.	Camrhon Hughes	6-6/269	OT	Harker Heights (Texas) High	Texas
12.	Hassan Ridgeway	6-4/250	DE	Mansfield (Texas) High	Texas
13.	Torshiro Davis	6-3/222	LB	Shreveport (La.) Woodlawn	Texas
14.	Peter Jinkens	6-1/208	LB	Dallas (Texas) Skyline	Texas
15.	Orlando Thomas	5-11/175	ATH	Copperas Cove (Texas) High	Texas
16.	Sterling Shepard	5-10/175	WR	Oklahoma City (Okla.) Heritage Hall	Oklahoma
17.	John Michael McGee	6-4/260	OG	Texarkana (Texas) Texas	Oklahoma
18.	Alex Ross	6-1/205	RB	Jenks (Okla.) High	Oklahoma
19.	Ty Darlington	6-3/275	OC	Apopka (Fla.) High	Oklahoma
20.	Deontay McManus	6-2/215	WR	Baltimore (Md.) Dunbar	West Virginia

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR: MALCOM BROWN

Texas defensive tackle signee Malcom Brown is incredibly quick and could step in with the departure of Kheeston Randall to the NFL. His athleticism could give opposing offensive linemen fits in the interior. At 6-2, 280 pounds, he still has plenty of room to fill out as well.

TOP SLEEPER: JAMES McFARLAND

TCU signed two prospects out of West Monroe, La., and linebacker James McFarland fits the Horned Frog mold of tough, aggressive defenders. At 6-3, 240 pounds, he could also end up playing defensive end, but there is no doubting he is a high-motor player who goes all-out on every snap.

LIKELY TO BE BEST NFL PLAYER: JOHNATHAN GRAY

Texas five-star running back commit Johnathan Gray broke nearly every national high school career rushing record and is incredibly tough to stop at 5-11, 190 pounds. Also a standout in track, he fits the NFL big-back prototype of being a big, fast back. Even entering a crowded backfield in Austin, he could still see plenty of early carries.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP: TORSHIRO DAVIS

U.S. Army All-American defensive end Torshiro Davis from Shreveport, La., was a long-time LSU commit and Tiger fans did not seemingly have reason to worry on signing day. However, he pulled a shocking switch when he decided to ink with Texas instead. It is not often that one of the top in-state players gets away from LSU, so it caught almost everybody off guard when he made the switch. A versatile prospect, he could also play linebacker for the Longhorns.

BIGGEST MISS: MARIO EDWARDS

Though Texas seemingly signs almost every prospect it wants from its home state, the Longhorns lost out on the No. 1 player in defensive tackle Mario Edwards. The No. 3 overall prospect in the nation opted for Florida State where his father, also named Mario Edwards, played his college ball. He certainly would have been a welcome addition in Austin.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF: TEXAS

While Oklahoma did a very good job, especially late in the process, it is hard to ignore the class Texas put together despite two consecutive down years on the field. Mack Brown has shown it will take a lot to beat him for players and no school has yet to figure out how to do so consistently.

RANKING

4 OKLAHOMA | SOONERS

Big 12 rank: 1 Record: 10-3 Big 12 record: 6-3 (T-3rd) Stadium: Gaylord Family-Oklahoma Memorial (82,112)

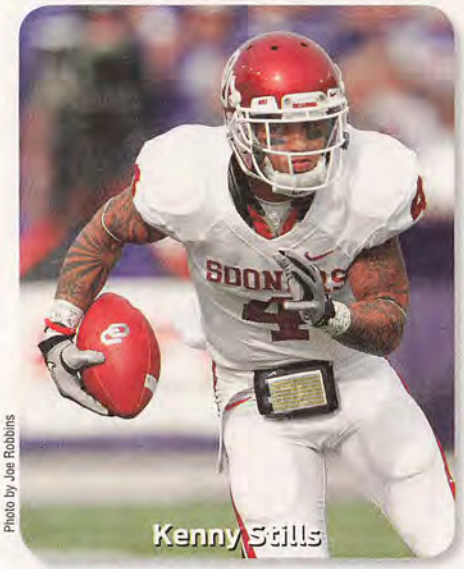


Photo by Joe Robbins

"Yeah, he's not like a normal freshman."
– Bob Stoops on WR Trey Metoyer

SOONERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bob Stoops — At Oklahoma and overall: 139-34, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Josh Heupel, Jay Norvell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Stoops

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1998
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 8 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Landry Jones, WR Kenny Stills, C Ben Habern, OL Gabe Ikard, RB Dominique Whaley, LB Tom Wort, CB Demontre Hurst, SS/CB Aaron Colvin, FS Tony Jefferson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Jones is among the most prolific quarterbacks in NCAA history. The Sooners have tons of playmakers at running back and receiver. The defensive tackle rotation has 37 career starts. Jefferson and Colvin are all over the field on defense. P Tress Way and PK Michael Hunnicutt are excellent.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Jones has to shake off a late-season slump. The receiving corps dropped 36 passes over the final six regular-season games in 2011. Replacing big-play defensive ends Frank Alexander and Ronnell Lewis, as well as tackles leader Travis Lewis, will be nearly impossible.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Landry Jones got a first-round draft projection, but still came back for his senior year.

He spent spring break working in California with noted "quarterback guru" George Whitfield, polishing up his footwork and his pocket awareness.

One reason he decided he needed extra coaching: Ryan Broyles. The NCAA's all-time receptions king meant a lot to Jones's production. When Broyles went down last year with a torn ACL, Jones' productivity died: zero touchdown passes and five interceptions in the final three-and-a-half regular season games.

Finding Broyles' replacement won't be easy, but there are plenty of candidates: Kenny Stills and Jaz Reynolds are returning starters, and Courtney Gardner and Trey Metoyer are intriguing newcomers.

The running game suffered last year after Dominique Whaley broke his ankle. Whaley, a former walk-on who was put on scholarship in January, averaged more than 100 yards per game. He was still recovering in the spring. Roy Finch took his spot last year, but watch for transfer Damien Williams, a junior college All-American.

Third-string quarterback Blake Bell entered the equation after Whaley's injury. The 6-6, 255-pound Bell rushed for 13 touchdowns in a Tim Tebow-type role last season.

DEFENSE

The Sooners will miss the big-play production from linebacker Travis Lewis (fourth in school history with 446 tackles), cornerback Jamell Fleming and defensive ends Frank Alexander and Ronnell Lewis.

The secondary should be a strength.

Three-year starter Demontre Hurst is back at corner. Two-year starter Aaron Colvin, who missed the spring after shoulder surgery, could take the other corner or return to his strong safety spot. Steady nickel back Tony Jefferson moves to free safety, while free safety Javon Harris slides down to strong.

Tom Wort and Corey Nelson are returning starters at linebacker, although Nelson played just about everywhere from nickel back to defensive end a year ago.

While R.J. Washington and David King are first-time starters at end, the three-man tackle rotation of Stacy McGee, Jamarkus McFarland and Casey Walker is back for their senior seasons.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Tress Way, an All-American candidate, pooch-punted 34 of 63 kicks inside the 20 and still averaged 42 yards last year.

Michael Hunnicutt resuscitated what had been dreadful placekicking since 2008 by making 21 of 24 field-goal attempts, although he suffered two short misses in a three-point home loss to Texas Tech.

Broyles was the Sooners' best punt returner. Whaley's injury could be troublesome, as he is the team's premier kickoff returner. Newcomers likely will fill both spots.

OVERVIEW

Mike Stoops, the head coach at Arizona for seven-plus seasons, is back as defensive coordinator. Defensive changes will be sudden, but will they be lasting? There are fewer concerns on offense. As long as Jones remains calm in the pocket and distributes the football to his playmakers, the Sooners will compete for the Big 12 title — and possibly more.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Trey Metoyer: It took some time, but Metoyer, arguably the top high school receiver in the nation in 2010, is finally ready to play for the Sooners. The 6-2, 198-pound wideout didn't get eligible last season and played at a military prep school. He got bigger, stronger and faster. That showed in the spring, when he appeared to be the Sooners' best receiver.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**12**	**Landry Jones***	**6-4**	**229**	**Sr.**
RB	8	Dominique Whaley	5-10	197	Sr.
FB	33	Trey Millard	6-2	249	Jr.
WR	**4**	**Kenny Stills***	**6-1**	**189**	**Jr.**
WR	**16**	**Jaz Reynolds***	**6-2**	**198**	**Jr.**
TE	82	Brannon Green	6-4	260	Jr.
LT	**69**	**Lane Johnson***	**6-6**	**296**	**Sr.**
LG	**64**	**Gabe Ikard***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
C	**61**	**Ben Habern***	**6-4**	**292**	**Sr.**
RG	**75**	**Tyler Evans***	**6-5**	**304**	**Sr.**
RT	79	Darryl Williams	6-6	313	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	91	R.J. Washington	6-3	248	Sr.
DT	**97**	**Jamarkus McFarland***	**6-2**	**296**	**Sr.**
NT	**92**	**Stacy McGee***	**6-4**	**299**	**Sr.**
DE	90	David King	6-5	273	Sr.
LB	**7**	**Corey Nelson***	**6-1**	**219**	**Jr.**
LB	**21**	**Tom Wort***	**6-0**	**229**	**Jr.**
LB	5	Joseph Ibiloye	6-3	219	Sr.
CB	**6**	**Demontre Hurst***	**5-10**	**181**	**Sr.**
CB	**14**	**Aaron Colvin***	**6-0**	**176**	**Jr.**
SS	**30**	**Javon Harris***	**5-11**	**207**	**Sr.**
FS	1	Tony Jefferson	5-10	199	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**18**	**Michael Hunnicutt***	**6-0**	**175**	**So.**
P	**36**	**Tress Way***	**6-1**	**218**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at UTEP
Sept. 8	FLORIDA A&M
Sept. 22	KANSAS STATE
Oct. 6	at Texas Tech
Oct. 13	vs. Texas (Dallas)
Oct. 20	KANSAS
Oct. 27	NOTRE DAME
Nov. 3	at Iowa State
Nov. 10	BAYLOR
Nov. 17	at West Virginia
Nov. 24	OKLAHOMA STATE
Dec. 1	at TCU

2011 RESULTS

W	TULSA	47-14
W	at Florida State	23-13
W	MISSOURI	38-28
W	BALL STATE	62-6
W	at Texas	55-17
W	at Kansas	47-17
L	TEXAS TECH	38-41
W	at Kansas State	58-17
W	TEXAS A&M	41-25
L	at Baylor	38-45
W	IOWA STATE	26-6
L	at Oklahoma State	10-44
	Insight Bowl	
W	vs. Iowa	31-14

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	39.5	10
Rushing	162.9	50
Passing	349.4	5
Total	512.3	5
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.1	31
Rushing	134.7	43
Pass	241.5	79
Total	376.2	55
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 2	- 0.15	74

RANKING

10 WEST VIRGINIA | MOUNTAINEERS

Big 12 rank: 2 Record: 10-3 Big East record: 5-2 (T-1st) Stadium: Mountaineer Field (60,000)

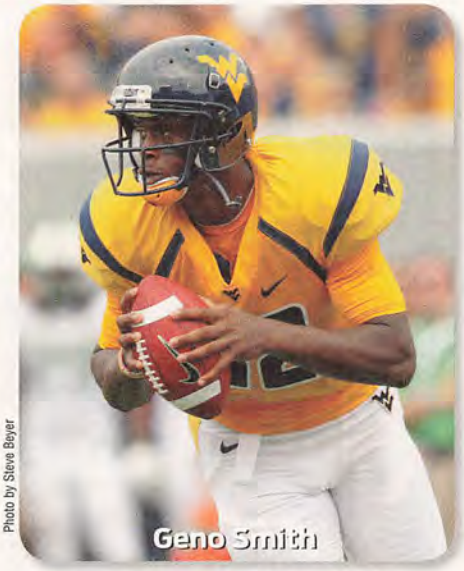


Photo by Steve Beyer

"I am starting to realize it's big-boy season right around the corner."
— DB Brodrick Jenkins

MOUNTAINEERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Dana Holgorsen — At West Virginia and overall: 10-3, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shannon Dawson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Joe DeForest, Keith Patterson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 6 defense; kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Geno Smith, RB Dustin Garrison, IR Tavon Austin, WR Stedman Bailey, DL Will Clarke, LB Terence Garvin, LB Josh Francis, S Darwin Cook

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: WVU's playmakers are among the best in the nation, and the Mountaineers found their up-tempo stride in the season-finale. Three experienced seniors anchor the offensive line. The defensive transition from the 3-3-5 to the 3-4 should not be terribly difficult.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Depth along both lines is a concern. Can the Mountaineers generate a pass rush? To create turnovers, WVU must consistently get to the quarterback, but Bruce Irvin and Julian Miller are no longer on the roster. Without pressure, many Big 12 teams will scorch WVU's defense.

OFFENSE

West Virginia was far from polished for most of last season in its first year under offensive-minded head coach Dana Holgorsen, but the Mountaineers did set a number of school single-season passing records.

And that 70 they put up against Clemson in the Orange Bowl is hard to forget.

West Virginia is back for much more in Year Two of Holgorsen's air-raid show.

West Virginia returns a veteran crew, including quarterback Geno Smith and receivers Stedman Bailey and Tavon Austin, a 5-9 waterbug who is so dangerous on quick passes behind the line of scrimmage. Bailey has the best hands on the team and is a deep threat.

Smith set the school record with 4,385 passing yards last season, and both Bailey (1,279) and Austin (1,186) surpassed the previous program record for receiving yards in a season.

In the backfield, Dustin Garrison, Shawne Alston and Andrew Buie should receive the bulk of the carries. Garrison emerged as the starter late last season before tearing his ACL just days before the Orange Bowl.

The Mountaineers don't possess proven backups on the line, which could prove disastrous if the unit suffers an injury or two. They do welcome back veteran lineman Josh Jenkins, who sat out last season with a knee injury.

DEFENSE

Days after the Orange Bowl victory, defensive assistants Jeff Casteel, Bill Kirelawich and David Lockwood left to reunite with former Mountaineers and Michigan coach Rich Rodriguez at Arizona.

In return, the departures afforded Holgorsen the opportunity to hire "his guys" on defense. He did that by plucking Joe DeForest from Oklahoma State as his defensive coordinator.

Holgorsen ditched Casteel's 3-3-5 odd stack defense for a 3-4 scheme that will, at times, morph into a 4-3.

The Mountaineers lost five starters and pass-rush specialist Bruce Irvin to graduation. Will Clarke is the most talented and versatile player on the line. He started in place of Irvin on early downs, shifting inside on passing downs.

Senior Terence Garvin, will play "STAR" linebacker in the 3-4 scheme. Garvin led WVU in tackles two seasons ago.

Brodrick Jenkins and Pat Miller bring experience to the secondary. The player to watch is Darwin Cook, a hard-hitting safety from Cleveland.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Tyler Bitancurt, who made 16 of 22 field-goal attempts last season, is back for his third year as starter. He kicked a 28-yard game-winner as time expired at South Florida, sending the Mountaineers to the Orange Bowl.

Corey Smith and Mike Molinari return after splitting punting duties last year, when they combined for an up-and-down effort. Expect Smith (39.7 yards per punt) to get the first crack this season.

Austin is one of the best kick returners in the country.

OVERVIEW

Expectations are high for the Mountaineers to succeed in their first year in the Big 12. WVU's offense is loaded and should able to trade points with everyone in its new league. Expect a few shootouts ... and plenty of wins.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Jordan Thompson: The true freshman (5-7, 159) is a shifty slot receiver who made a positive impression in the spring after enrolling early. He had eight catches for 66 yards and a score in the spring game, and the offense can always use another pass-catcher behind Tavon Austin and Stedman Bailey.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**12**	**Geno Smith***	**6-3**	**214**	**Sr.**
RB	**29**	**Dustin Garrison***	**5-9**	**166**	**So.**
RB	20	Shawne Alston	5-11	225	Sr.
WR	**3**	**Stedman Bailey***	**5-10**	**193**	**Jr.**
WR	81	J.D. Woods	6-1	189	Sr.
IR	**1**	**Tavon Austin***	**5-9**	**174**	**Sr.**
LT	67	Quinton Spain	6-5	335	So.
LG	77	Josh Jenkins	6-4	291	Sr.
C	**74**	**Joe Madsen***	**6-4**	**310**	**Sr.**
RG	**57**	**Jeff Braun***	**6-5**	**321**	**Sr.**
RT	**76**	**Pat Eger***	**6-6**	**301**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DT	91	J.B. Lageman	6-3	272	Sr.
NT	**99**	**Jorge Wright***	**6-2**	**289**	**Sr.**
DE	**98**	**Will Clarke***	**6-6**	**269**	**Jr.**
LB	17	Josh Francis	6-1	221	Sr.
LB	**28**	**Terence Garvin***	**6-3**	**223**	**Sr.**
LB	33	Jared Barber	6-0	230	So.
LB	**47**	**Doug Rigg***	**6-0**	**242**	**Jr.**
CB	**6**	**Pat Miller***	**5-11**	**191**	**Sr.**
CB	23	Brodrick Jenkins	5-10	186	Jr.
SS	**25**	**Darwin Cook***	**5-11**	**204**	**Jr.**
FS	26	Travis Bell	6-2	201	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**40**	**Tyler Bitancurt***	**6-1**	**203**	**Sr.**
P	**44**	**Corey Smith***	**6-0**	**211**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	MARSHALL
Sept. 15	JAMES MADISON
Sept. 22	MARYLAND
Sept. 29	BAYLOR
Oct. 6	at Texas
Oct. 13	at Texas Tech
Oct. 20	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 3	TCU
Nov. 10	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 17	OKLAHOMA
Nov. 24	at Iowa State
Dec. 1	KANSAS

2011 RESULTS

W	MARSHALL	34-13
W	NORFOLK STATE	55-12
W	at Maryland	37-31
L	LSU	21-47
W	BOWLING GREEN	55-10
W	CONNECTICUT	43-16
L	at Syracuse	23-49
W	at Rutgers	41-31
L	LOUISVILLE	35-38
W	at Cincinnati	24-21
W	PITTSBURGH	21-20
W	at South Florida	30-27
	Orange Bowl	
W	vs. Clemson	70-33

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	37.6	13
Rushing	122.7	92
Passing	346.9	6
Total	469.5	15
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.8	61
Rushing	144.8	55
Pass	203.5	35
Total	348.2	33
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING **15**

TCU | HORNED FROGS

Big 12 rank: 3 Record: 11-2 MWC record: 7-0 (1st) Stadium: Amon G. Carter Stadium (45,000)

Photo by Steve Beyer

"I don't care how many times people in the Big 12 throw it, it's still the most physical team (that wins)."
— Coach Gary Patterson

HORNED FROGS at a GLANCE

COACH: Gary Patterson — At TCU and overall: 109-30, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Jarrett Anderson, Rusty Burns
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dick Bumpas

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011, Mountain West
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 12, 7 offense, 5 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Casey Pachall, RB Ed Wesley, RB Matthew Tucker, WR Josh Boyce, WR Brandon Carter, WR LaDarius Brown, DE Stansly Maponga, LB Kenny Cain, S Jonathan Anderson

PRIMARY STRENTHS: With his top receiving targets and three leading rushers returning, Pachall and the TCU offense could be as formidable as any in the Big 12. Pachall's potential with a year's experience is seemingly unlimited. His leadership skills and ability to take charge impressed everybody in the program.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Although the offense returns almost all of its skill players, the loss of three starting linemen could be an issue (there's more depth, but less experience). The secondary is lacking playing time, but is talented. Young linebackers were forced to move up the depth chart quicker than usual. The kicking game is a big question.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Casey Pachall is back, and he's not alone as TCU starts a new era in the Big 12.

TCU returns seven starters, including three of its top four receivers and its top four running backs. Running backs Ed Wesley, Waymon James and Matthew Tucker form the only threesome in the nation to return after each ran for more than 700 yards in 2011.

They share the carries, and the rotation helps TCU keep fresh legs on the field during a game and throughout the season.

While the Frogs' skill positions are stacked, the line must replace three starters. Right guard Blaize Foltz and center James Fry are the returning starters.

What TCU lacks in experience on the line, they may make up for in sheer talent. Left tackle Tayo Fabuluje, who had to sit out 2011 after transferring from BYU, could turn out to be a huge find.

James Dunbar, a junior, was expected to be the starting left tackle last season before losing out to Jeff Olson. Coaches hope Dunbar has grown into the starting role after playing in five games last season.

DEFENSE

Losing linebackers Tank Carder (to the NFL) and Tanner Brock (for disciplinary reasons) hurts the depth at the position. But Kenny Cain, who led the team with 72 tackles in 2011, is back. Deryck Gildon played well as a reserve true freshman.

The defensive line doesn't change much except for the loss of D.J. Yendrey, who started 12 games in '11 but was kicked off the team in February, along with Brock.

Defensive end Stansly Maponga is a dominating force on the left side, and Ross Forrest is an experienced and smart player on the right end. David Johnson started the last nine games at nose tackle in '11, while tackle Jon Lewis impressed as a reserve.

Although the secondary is less experienced than last year, there's more depth. The projected frontline players are better athletes, including strong safety Sam Carter, weak safety Jonathan Anderson and cornerback Kevin White — all sophomores.

SPECIAL TEAMS

TCU loses a four-year starting placekicker and punter, so experience will be an issue. Two incoming freshmen — kicker Jaden Oberkrom and punter Ethan Perry — likely will compete for starting roles.

There also will be a void in kick returns with the loss of Greg McCoy, who returned three career kicks for touchdowns. Skye Dawson, the fastest player on the team, will return kicks, along with James. Brandon Carter and Wesley will again return punts.

OVERVIEW

TCU is coming off a rebuilding year that still resulted in 11 wins, a conference title and a bowl victory. But moving into the Big 12 will be a challenge, even for the Frogs' experienced and talented offense. The defense will be tested by faster, stronger athletes from week to week. The biggest question remains whether TCU will build enough depth to contend for the league title.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Devonte Fields: The 6-4, 240-pound true freshman was rated the No. 3 defensive end in Texas but could be used at various spots, including special teams and at linebacker. Fields, who chose TCU over Oklahoma, Michigan, Tennessee and Texas A&M, had 13 sacks as a senior at Arlington Martin High.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**4**	**Casey Pachall***	**6-5**	**226**	**Jr.**
RB	**34**	**Ed Wesley***	**5-9**	**200**	**Sr.**
WR	**82**	**Josh Boyce***	**6-0**	**203**	**Jr.**
WR	**11**	**Skye Dawson***	**5-9**	**183**	**Sr.**
WR	**3**	**Brandon Carter***	**5-11**	**161**	**So.**
TE	86	Corey Fuller	6-6	255	Sr.
LT	69	Tayo Fabuluje	6-7	315	So.
LG	75	John Wooldridge	6-5	310	Jr.
C	**64**	**James Fry***	**6-3**	**290**	**Sr.**
RG	**66**	**Blaize Foltz***	**6-4**	**310**	**Sr.**
RT	56	James Dunbar	6-6	305	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**90**	**Stansly Maponga***	**6-2**	**265**	**Jr.**
DT	61	Jon Lewis	6-2	275	So.
DT	**53**	**David Johnson***	**6-2**	**270**	**So.**
DE	**52**	**Ross Forrest***	**6-4**	**265**	**Sr.**
LB	**51**	**Kenny Cain***	**6-1**	**225**	**Sr.**
LB	36	Deryck Gildon	6-2	235	So.
CB	**2**	**Jason Verrett***	**5-10**	**180**	**Jr.**
CB	25	Kevin White	5-10	174	So.
WS	41	Jonathan Anderson	6-3	208	So.
SS	17	Sam Carter	6-1	220	So.
FS	6	Elisha Olabode	5-10	182	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	24	Ryan DeNucci	5-10	170	So.
P	31	Cale Patterson	5-11	185	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 8	GRAMBLING STATE
Sept. 15	at Kansas
Sept. 22	VIRGINIA
Sept. 29	at SMU
Oct. 6	IOWA STATE
Oct. 13	at Baylor
Oct. 20	TEXAS TECH
Oct. 27	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 3	at West Virginia
Nov. 10	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 24	at Texas
Dec. 1	OKLAHOMA

2011 RESULTS

L	at Baylor	48-50
W	at Air Force	35-19
W	ULM	38-17
W	PORTLAND STATE	55-13
L	SMU (OT)	33-40
W	at San Diego State	27-14
W	NEW MEXICO	69-0
W	BYU	38-28
W	at Wyoming	31-20
W	at Boise State	36-35
W	COLORADO STATE	34-10
W	UNLV	56-9
	Poinsettia Bowl	
W	vs. Louisiana Tech	31-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	40.9	9
Rushing	208.6	19
Passing	231.6	63
Total	440.2	28
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.5	28
Rushing	123.8	25
Pass	223.6	60
Total	347.4	32
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	44

RANKING

16 OKLAHOMA STATE | COWBOYS

Big 12 rank: 4 | Record: 12-1 | Big 12 record: 8-1 (1st) | Stadium: Boone Pickens Stadium (60,218)

Photo by Andrew Weber-US PRESSWIRE

"We like his maturity and we like where he's at in our offense, essentially still being a high school player." — Coach Mike Gundy, on freshman QB Wes Lunt

COWBOYS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mike Gundy — At OSU and overall: 59-30, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Monken
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Bill Young, Glenn Spencer

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 6 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Joseph Randle, WR Tracy Moore, OL Lane Taylor, LB Shaun Lewis, CB Brodrick Brown, CB Justin Gilbert, FS Daytawion Lowe, P/K Quinn Sharp

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The linebackers and defensive backs are among the most athletic and active in the nation, helping collect a nation-leading 44 turnovers in 2011. Randle and Jeremy Smith combined for 6.4 yards per carry and 33 touchdowns last season. Sharp is probably the best placekicker, punter and kickoff man in college football.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: QB Wes Lunt is a true freshman. The youngster faces a lot of pressure as he tries to replace Brandon Weeden. WR Justin Blackmon was such a big part of the offense (232 catches, 3,304 yards, 39 TDs the last two seasons); can anyone step into that role?

OFFENSE

The Cowboys can't possibly replace the big-play productivity of quarterback Brandon Weeden and receiver Justin Blackmon.

Weeden became the Cowboys' career passing leader (and first All-Big 12 quarterback), and Blackmon set every OSU receiving record (and won two Biletnikoff Awards). They both became first-round draft picks.

Now, the Cowboys turn to quarterback Wes Lunt, a true freshman from Illinois. Lunt, an early enrollee, won the starting job during the spring, though some observers felt there wasn't much separation from Clint Chelf and J.W. Walsh.

With a young quarterback and a lack of a proven big-play receiver, expect the Cowboys to open up the running game. Wide receiver Tracy Moore has the team's only 100-yard receiving games; he had two last season.

Joseph Randle (1,216 yards, 43 receptions, 26 touchdowns) was the Big 12's best back last season, and short-yardage hammer Jeremy Smith (7.1 yards per carry, nine scores) might be the league's best backup.

Only two starters return from what was the league's best offensive line — guards Lane Taylor and Jonathan Rush — although the two new tackles were part-time starters and the new center is a senior.

DEFENSE

One of America's most active secondaries should be a real asset.

Cornerbacks Justin Gilbert and Brodrick Brown (a combined 10 interceptions, 25 passes defensed, 127 tackles in 2011) and strong safety Daytawion Lowe are back. Lowe made a team-leading 97 tackles last year.

The three starting linebackers — Alex Elkins, Caleb Lavey and Shaun Lewis — also return. They accounted for 225 tackles, four interceptions and seven fumbles last season.

The defensive line is in flux. Ends Jamie Blatnick and Richetti Jones (12 sacks combined last season) are gone. Defensive tackles Nigel Nicholas (10 tackles for loss) and Anthony Rogers (nine starts) are back, although Nicholas moved to end in the spring.

Although the defense ranked 107th nationally last season, the Cowboys led the nation with 44 takeaways and a plus-21 turnover margin. Turnovers come and go, so the defense needs to be better overall — and should be.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Quinn Sharp could be the nation's best placekicker and best punter.

He made 22 of 25 field-goal attempts last season, averaged 46.3 yards per punt and knocked 61 of his 114 kickoffs for touchbacks. His controversial miss in the loss at Iowa State — the ball floated just above a short upright — kept OSU out of the national championship game.

Oklahoma State has one of the nation's best kickoff returners in Justin Gilbert, who averaged 27 yards per return last season and scored two touchdowns. He also scored twice in 2010. Gilbert might add punt return duty this year.

OVERVIEW

OSU won its first ever Big 12 title (first outright conference crown since the 1940s) and has the league's best conference record (20-5) over the past three seasons. Now that Mike Gundy has a big contract and big expectations, can the excellence sustain itself without Weeden-to-Blackmon?

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Calvin Barnett: Signed with Arkansas two years ago but ended up in junior college, where he became a second-team All-American at Navarro (Texas) Community College in 2011. Barnett, who was Rivals.com's top high school prospect in Oklahoma after the 2009 season, helped Navarro win the NJCAA national title in 2010.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	Wes Lunt	6-4	211	Fr.
RB	**1**	**Joseph Randle***	**6-1**	**194**	**Jr.**
WR	**87**	**Tracy Moore***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
IR	18	Blake Jackson	6-3	238	Jr.
IR	5	Josh Stewart	5-10	170	So.
WR	**82**	**Isaiah Anderson***	**5-10**	**168**	**Sr.**
LT	61	Michael Bowie	6-4	323	Sr.
LG	**70**	**Jonathan Rush***	**6-4**	**284**	**Sr.**
C	60	Evan Epstein	6-3	291	Sr.
RG	**68**	**Lane Taylor***	**6-3**	**328**	**Sr.**
RT	71	Parker Graham	6-7	292	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**89**	**Nigel Nicholas***	**6-3**	**269**	**Sr.**
DT	**94**	**Anthony Rogers***	**6-3**	**293**	**Jr.**
DT	98	Davidell Collins	6-5	267	Jr.
DE	96	Ryan Robinson	6-4	246	Sr.
LB	**11**	**Shaun Lewis***	**5-11**	**222**	**Jr.**
LB	**45**	**Caleb Lavey***	**6-3**	**240**	**Jr.**
LB	**37**	**Alex Elkins***	**6-3**	**222**	**Sr.**
CB	**19**	**Brodrick Brown***	**5-8**	**183**	**Sr.**
CB	**4**	**Justin Gilbert***	**6-0**	**194**	**Jr.**
SS	2	Lavocheya Cooper	6-0	186	Jr.
FS	**8**	**Daytawion Lowe***	**5-11**	**198**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**13**	**Quinn Sharp***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
P	**13**	**Quinn Sharp***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	SAVANNAH STATE
Sept. 8	at Arizona
Sept. 15	LOUISIANA
Sept. 29	TEXAS
Oct. 13	at Kansas
Oct. 20	IOWA STATE
Oct. 27	TCU
Nov. 3	at Kansas State
Nov. 10	WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 17	TEXAS TECH
Nov. 24	at Oklahoma
Dec. 1	at Baylor

2011 RESULTS

W	LOUISIANNA	61-34
W	ARIZONA	37-14
W	at Tulsa	59-33
W	at Texas A&M	30-29
W	KANSAS	70-28
W	at Texas	38-26
W	at Missouri	45-24
W	BAYLOR	59-24
W	KANSAS STATE	52-45
W	at Texas Tech	66-6
L	at Iowa State (2OT)	31-37
W	OKLAHOMA	44-10
	Fiesta Bowl	
W	vs. Stanford (OT)	41-38

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	48.7	2
Rushing	158.6	58
Passing	387.2	2
Total	545.9	3
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.8	61
Rushing	184.9	90
Pass	271.9	107
Total	456.8	107
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 21	+ 1.62	1

RANKING

19 TEXAS | LONGHORNS

Big 12 rank: 5 Record: 8-5 Big 12 record:4-5 (T-6th) Stadium: Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial (100,119)

Photo by John Williamson

Malcolm Brown

"We're so much further along than this time last year."
— Coach Mack Brown

LONGHORNS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mack Brown — At Texas: 141-39, 14 years
OVERALL: 227-113-1, 28 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Bryan Harsin, Major Applewhite
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Manny Diaz

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2009
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 7 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Malcolm Brown, WR Jaxon Shipley, OG Mason Walters, DE Jackson Jeffcoat, DE Alex Okafor, LB Jordan Hicks, CB Carrington Byndom, CB Quandre Diggs

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Three gifted backs and an improving offensive line may give Harsin the power running game he needs. Diaz worked wonders with a young defense and has plenty of tools again. Texas could have the best pass rush and pass defense in the Big 12.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Can David Ash and/or Case McCoy avoid turnovers and avoid breakdowns on the road? The linebackers ooze potential but remain largely unproven outside of Hicks. Given that Texas could play a lot of close games, the kicking game looks like a scary proposition unless freshman Nick Jordan delivers.

OFFENSE

Case McCoy and David Ash took turns last season proving they weren't ready to be the starting quarterback.

The duo, who supplanted Garrett Gilbert early in the season, combined for 11 touchdown passes and 12 interceptions. Ash sometimes looked the part of a game manager, but he struggled after injuries decimated the run game.

McCoy, younger brother of two-time Heisman finalist Colt McCoy, needs to improve his mechanics and consistency. He beat Texas A&M, but then had five turnovers in the regular-season finale against Baylor.

Ash is the front-runner after starting the Holiday Bowl, but coach Mack Brown has steadfastly avoided naming a starter.

If Texas can find its guy under center, everything else seems to be in place. Freshman Jonathan Gray, the second-most prolific running back in Texas high school history, brings game-changing capabilities. Sophomore Malcolm Brown (742 yards) and Joe Bergeron (463) were very good between the tackles before injuries derailed their freshman seasons.

A once paper-mache thin offensive line now has legitimate depth, with guard Mason Walters a snarly emerging leader.

More playmakers at receiver are a must, with junior Mike Davis, coming off a confident spring, likely to join Jaxon Shipley. The search continues for a tight end or two to make Bryan Harsin's offense work.

DEFENSE

Manny Diaz wasn't as heralded a coordinator hire as Harsin, but he constructed the Big 12's best unit, one that finished 11th nationally in total defense.

Year two might be even better if the young linebackers produce.

Defensive ends Alex Okafor and Jackson Jeffcoat combined for 15 sacks and should be even better after a year in the system, especially if Jeffcoat is recovered from a torn pectoral muscle.

The secondary might be one of the nation's best. Carrington Byndom (58 tackles) and Quandre Diggs (four interceptions) might be the best cover-corner combination in the Big 12 after early growing pains. Safety Kenny Vaccaro ranks among the hardest hitters in college football.

The question mark is linebacker, where the departed Keenan Robinson and Emmanuel Acho combined for 237 tackles. Junior Jordan Hicks (65 tackles) looks ready to fulfill his promise after a dominant Holiday Bowl. He could be poised for a breakout season in Diaz's blitzing scheme.

SPECIAL TEAMS

This season, uncertainty rules. Ben Pruitt and William Russ, who's likely to win the punting job, each struggled on field-goal attempts in the spring. True freshman Nick Jordan, from Coppell (Texas) High School, may have to grow up in a hurry.

OVERVIEW

Texas responded to reports that Brown might be forced into retirement by extending his contract through 2020. Brown said he's energized again after Texas has gone 13-12 the past two seasons. He believes the Longhorns are maybe two or three seasons away from a national title run. But to position itself, Texas must build on last season. If Texas can minimize the mistakes at the quarterback position, a 10-win season is possible.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Jonathan Gray: Blessed with great vision, instincts and sprinter speed, Gray was ranked as the nation's top running back by Rivals.com. Gray ran for 10,908 yards at Texas' Aledo High School while scoring 205 touchdowns. "He was a great high school running back," coach Mack Brown said, "and we think that can carry over."

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	14	**David Ash***	6-3	222	So.
RB	28	**Malcolm Brown***	6-0	213	So.
FB	30	Ryan Roberson	5-10	238	Sr.
WR	8	**Jaxon Shipley***	6-1	190	So.
WR	1	**Mike Davis***	6-2	188	Jr.
TE	18	D.J. Grant	6-3	238	Sr.
LT	51	Donald Hawkins	6-5	310	Jr.
LG	75	**Trey Hopkins***	6-4	298	Jr.
C	55	**Dominic Espinosa***	6-4	298	So.
RG	72	**Mason Walters***	6-6	315	Jr.
RT	68	**Josh Cochran***	6-6	285	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	44	**Jackson Jeffcoat***	6-5	250	Jr.
DT	99	Desmond Jackson	6-1	285	So.
DT	85	Ashton Dorsey	6-2	295	Jr.
DE	80	**Alex Okafor***	6-4	260	Sr.
LB	15	Demarco Cobbs	6-2	215	Jr.
LB	33	Steve Edmond	6-3	260	So.
LB	3	**Jordan Hicks***	6-2	235	Jr.
CB	23	**Carrington Byndom***	6-0	180	Jr.
CB	28	**Quandre Diggs***	5-10	200	So.
SS	17	**Adrian Philips***	5-11	199	Jr.
FS	4	**Kenny Vaccaro***	6-1	215	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Nick Jordan	6-1	175	Fr.
P	14	Will Russ	6-4	193	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	WYOMING
Sept. 8	NEW MEXICO
Sept. 15	at Ole Miss
Sept. 29	at Oklahoma State
Oct. 6	WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 13	vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)
Oct. 20	BAYLOR
Oct. 27	at Kansas
Nov. 3	at Texas Tech
Nov. 10	IOWA STATE
Nov. 24	TCU
Dec. 1	at Kansas State

2011 RESULTS

W	RICE	34-9
W	BYU	17-16
W	at UCLA	49-20
W	at Iowa State	37-14
L	OKLAHOMA	17-55
L	OKLAHOMA STATE	26-38
W	KANSAS	43-0
W	TEXAS TECH	52-20
L	at Missouri	5-17
L	KANSAS STATE	13-17
W	at Texas A&M	27-25
L	at Baylor	24-48
	Holiday Bowl	
W	vs. California	21-10

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.1	55
Rushing	202.6	21
Passing	189.9	86
Total	392.5	54
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.2	33
Rushing	96.2	6
Pass	209.9	42
Total	306.1	11
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	59

RANKING

22 KANSAS STATE | WILDCATS

Big 12 rank: 6 Record: 10-3 Big 12 record: 7-2 (2nd) Stadium: Bill Snyder Family Stadium (50,000)

Photo by Joe Robbins

Collin Klein

"Last season taught us how small the margin is between success and failure."

— QB Collin Klein

WILDCATS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bill Snyder — At Kansas State and overall: 159-83-1, 20 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Del Miller, Dana Dimel
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Hayes

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2003
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Collin Klein, RB John Hubert, WR Tyler Lockett, LB Arthur Brown, LB Tre Walker

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Wildcats have a star quarterback, three quality tailbacks and ample depth at wide receiver. There is even an experienced tight end, so offensive threats will fill the field. Linebackers Brown and Walker are playmakers who can make up for mistakes elsewhere.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: K-State lost three experienced offensive linemen, and there could be two freshmen helping to fill the holes. There is no depth at quarterback. If Klein gets injured, all bets are off. K-State won six games by a touchdown or less last season; can the Cats recapture that magic?

OFFENSE

Gritty quarterback Collin Klein, never flashy, often bloody, willed the Wildcats at times last season, running for 27 touchdowns, an FBS record for quarterbacks.

Coach Bill Snyder does not want Klein to run 35 times in a game, as he did in beating Texas A&M in overtime. The Wildcats do not want Klein to have 64 more rushing attempts than any player in the Big 12 again.

They need more from Klein in the passing game, and they think they will get it, as evidenced by Klein going 47 of 56 for 475 yards and six touchdowns in the spring game.

Klein has plenty of quality targets. Wide receiver Chris Harper had 40 catches for 547 yards. Tyler Lockett started transferring his success in special teams to wide receiver.

Tight end Travis Tannahill, a three-year starter, is poised for his best season.

The stable of running backs is deep, led by John Hubert, who rushed for 970 yards last season. Angelo Pease played in 10 games as a junior college transfer and manned the Wildcat package. Robert Rose is only 5-4, but he was a standout all spring.

The main concern is the line, where K-State loses three starters. A healthy Manase Foketi, who missed all of last season with injury, is important. BJ Finney, a Freshman All-American last season, returns at center.

DEFENSE

The defense will be built around middle linebacker Arthur Brown, the Big 12 Defensive Newcomer of the Year after recording 101 tackles. Tre Walker also returns at linebacker, and converted quarterback Justin Tuggle could make the unit athletic and dangerous.

Defensive end Meshak Williams had seven sacks, tied for fourth in the Big 12. Junior college transfer Adam Davis had a solid first season at end, including three tackles for loss in the Cotton Bowl.

Inside, tackle Vai Lutui was inconsistent as a newcomer but should be better as a senior. Kansas State needs newcomers to produce on the line, notably junior college recruits Chaquil Reed and Wesley Hollingshed.

Junior safety Ty Zimmerman, a two-year starter, is a heady player who helps direct traffic; he made 40 unassisted tackles last season.

Cornerback Nigel Malone had seven interceptions and 10 pass breakups. Allen Chapman should get a look to start at corner after recording 50 tackles and one interception.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Anthony Cantele and punter Ryan Doerr are returning senior starters with plenty of experience. Lockett averaged 35.2 yards per kickoff return, best in Big 12 history. DeMarcus Robinson, 5-6 and shifty, had a 95-yard return in the spring game and could contribute on returns, as well.

OVERVIEW

Kansas State overachieved last season, going in with little-to-no expectations and winning 10 games. This season is the opposite; the Wildcats have a loaded offense, led by a Heisman-contending quarterback, and they will not catch anyone by surprise. The defense has holes, and K-State has to continue to play well in the clutch, but another big season is possible.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Marquez Clark: He ranked among the top 20 junior college recruits nationally after catching 98 passes for 1,639 yards — a junior college record — at Navarro JC in Texas. "You can't have that kind of yardage without having some skill," coach Bill Snyder said.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	7	**Collin Klein***	6-5	226	Sr.
RB	33	**John Hubert***	5-7	191	Jr.
FB	37	**Braden Wilson***	6-4	254	Sr.
WR	16	**Tyler Lockett***	5-11	175	So.
WR	3	**Chris Harper***	6-1	229	Sr.
TE	80	**Travis Tannahill***	6-3	253	Sr.
LT	57	Manase Foketi	6-5	325	Sr.
LG	50	**Nick Puetz***	6-3	304	Sr.
C	66	**BJ Finney***	6-4	303	So.
RG	77	Boston Stiverson	6-4	306	Fr.
RT	55	Cody Whitehair	6-3	300	Fr.
DEFENSE					
DE	55	**Adam Davis***	6-0	259	Sr.
DT	92	**Vai Lutui***	6-2	289	Sr.
DT	96	John Sua	6-0	290	Sr.
DE	42	Meshak Williams	6-3	245	Sr.
LB	4	**Arthur Brown***	6-1	228	Sr.
LB	50	**Tre Walker***	6-3	225	Jr.
LB	2	Justin Tuggle	6-3	233	Sr.
CB	3	Allen Chapman	5-11	180	Sr.
CB	24	**Nigel Malone***	5-10	185	Sr.
SS	12	**Ty Zimmerman***	6-1	203	Jr.
FS	5	Thomas Ferguson	6-0	202	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	10	**Anthony Cantele***	6-0	197	Sr.
P	9	**Ryan Doerr***	6-3	184	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 8	MIAMI
Sept. 15	NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 22	at Oklahoma
Oct. 6	KANSAS
Oct. 13	at Iowa State
Oct. 20	at West Virginia
Oct. 27	TEXAS TECH
Nov. 3	OKLAHOMA STATE
Nov. 10	at TCU
Nov. 17	at Baylor
Dec. 1	TEXAS

2011 RESULTS

W	EASTERN KENTUCKY	10-7
W	KENT STATE	37-0
W	at Miami	28-24
W	BAYLOR	36-35
W	MISSOURI	24-17
W	at Texas Tech	41-34
W	at Kansas	59-21
L	OKLAHOMA	17-58
L	at Oklahoma State	45-52
W	TEXAS A&M (OT)	53-50
W	at Texas	17-13
W	IOWA STATE	30-23
	Cotton Bowl	
L	vs. Arkansas	16-29

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.8	34
Rushing	185.5	29
Passing	151.5	108
Total	337.0	101

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.9	68
Rushing	131.2	37
Pass	263.4	103
Total	394.6	72

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 12	+ 0.92	9

RANKING

40 TEXAS TECH | RED RAIDERS

Big 12 rank: 7 Record: 5-7 Big 12 record: 2-7 (9th) Stadium: Jones AT&T Stadium (60,454)

Seth Doege

Photo by Peter G. Aiken-US PRESSWIRE

"We've made some strides and we needed to. We weren't very good."
— Coach Tommy Tuberville

RED RAIDERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Tommy Tuberville — At Texas Tech: 13-12, 2 years
OVERALL: 123-72, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Neal Brown
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Art Kaufman

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Southwest Conference co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010, TicketCity
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 5 offense, 4 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Seth Doege, RB Eric Stephens, WR Darrin Moore, WR Eric Ward, TE Jace Amaro, DE Pete Robertson, LB Will Smith, CB Cornelius Douglas

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The passing game is top notch and can go toe-to-toe with anyone in the Big 12. If Stephens and DeAndre Washington return from injury, the running game also will be a strength. Defensively, the Red Raiders are better than a year ago.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: At the conclusion of spring ball, the Red Raiders had only one reliable cornerback in Cornelius Douglas. Tech tried to plug holes such as that with junior college players, but who knows what that will yield? Tech's defensive line isn't as strong as Tuberville would like.

OFFENSE

The Red Raiders return almost all of their firepower from last year's offense — an offense that did its best to keep the 5-7 team afloat despite a terrible defense.

Texas Tech is back for more with senior quarterback Seth Doege and a receiving corps that features three receivers who each hauled in more than 550 yards in receptions last season. Eric Ward had 84 catches for 800 yards and 11 touchdowns.

The running game is a little questionable.

Senior running back Eric Stephens Jr. was well on pace to be the first Red Raider running back in more than a decade to break the 1,000-yard rushing mark, but he suffered torn knee ligaments in his left knee in the fifth game of the season.

Sophomore running back DeAndre Washington — who shouldered most of Stephens' load — tore an ACL in the second-to-last game of the season. Both running backs are ahead of pace to return.

The biggest question mark is the offensive line.

Tech returns two starters with LaAdrian Waddle at left tackle for a third consecutive season and Deveric Gallington, a former right guard who will start at center. The Red Raiders also added former Texas A&M starter Brian Thomas, a tackle who will be a graduate student.

DEFENSE

The defense has been completely overhauled in scheme and personnel.

Last year's 4-2-5 was a disaster, and the defensive coordinator behind it, Chad Glasgow, resigned, while a few other defensive staffers got the axe.

Head coach Tommy Tuberville brought in some old friends from his head coaching days at Mississippi and Auburn to help him run a 4-3 defense under the leadership of new defensive coordinator Art Kaufman — North Carolina's interim coordinator last season.

Looking for a quick personnel fix, Tuberville added five junior college players to the defense, highlighted by middle linebacker Will Smith out of Riverside Community College in California. Smith ended up at middle linebacker in the spring.

The linebackers are the strength of the defense, but safety-turned-defensive end Pete Robertson has been defined by coaches as a game changer with a skill-set similar to former A&M star Von Miller.

The secondary's depth is not ideal, especially at safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Red Raiders, needing a new placekicker, will look to junior college transfer Ryan Bustin, who looked good in the spring and seems to have range to about 50 yards. Junior Ryan Erxleben returns at punter after averaging 41.7 yards as a sophomore.

OVERVIEW

After a disappointing and injury-riddled 5-7 season, the goal was to get immediate depth from junior college transfers on defense. Ultimately, those transfers will determine how far the Red Raiders go in 2012. If the defense can hold its own, the offense will take care of the rest, and the Red Raiders will be a tough challenge, even for the better Big 12 teams.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Derek Edwards: Edwards (6-1, 171) arrived as a highly touted mid-year freshman enrollee in 2011 but looked lost during spring ball and redshirted. A year later, it looks like Edwards might be a top threat in the passing game with great hands, ball tracking and route-adjusting skills.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**7**	**Seth Doege***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
RB	24	Eric Stephens Jr.	5-8	195	Sr.
RB	21	DeAndre Washington	5-8	191	So.
WR	**18**	**Eric Ward***	**6-0**	**203**	**Jr.**
WR	14	Darrin Moore	6-4	220	Sr.
TE	22	Jace Amaro	6-5	255	So.
LT	**65**	**LaAdrian Waddle***	**6-6**	**318**	**Sr.**
LG	72	Beau Carpenter	6-6	291	So.
C	**66**	**Deveric Gallington***	**6-3**	**321**	**Sr.**
RG	**68**	**Terry McDaniel***	**6-6**	**329**	**Sr.**
RT	N/A	Brian Thomas	6-3	315	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	90	Branden Jackson	6-4	251	Fr.
DT	**91**	**Kerry Hyder***	**6-2**	**275**	**Jr.**
DT	8	Delvon Simmons	6-5	282	So.
DE	10	Pete Robertson	6-3	220	So.
LB	**1**	**Terrance Bullitt***	**6-3**	**215**	**Jr.**
LB	50	Will Smith	6-3	228	Jr.
LB	13	Sam Eguavoen	6-1	225	So.
CB	2	Cornelius Douglas	5-9	203	Sr.
CB	21	Bruce Jones	5-9	179	Jr.
SS	**12**	**D.J. Johnson***	**6-0**	**198**	**Sr.**
FS	**16**	**Cody Davis***	**6-2**	**203**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	48	Ryan Bustin	5-11	176	So.
P	**26**	**Ryan Erxleben***	**6-1**	**193**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 8	at Texas State
Sept. 15	NEW MEXICO
Sept. 29	at Iowa State
Oct. 6	OKLAHOMA
Oct. 13	WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 20	at TCU
Oct. 27	at Kansas State
Nov. 3	TEXAS
Nov. 10	KANSAS
Nov. 17	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 24	vs. Baylor (Arlington, TX)

2011 RESULTS

W	TEXAS STATE-SAN MARCOS	50-10
W	at New Mexico	59-13
W	NEVADA	35-34
W	at Kansas	45-34
L	TEXAS A&M	40-45
L	KANSAS STATE	34-41
W	at Oklahoma	41-38
L	IOWA STATE	7-41
L	at Texas	20-52
L	OKLAHOMA STATE	6-66
L	at Missouri	27-31
L	at Baylor	42-66

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.8	22
Rushing	125.2	87
Passing	345.4	7
Total	470.6	13
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	39.3	117
Rushing	258.8	120
Pass	226.8	66
Total	485.6	114
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

43 BAYLOR | BEARS

Big 12 rank: 8 Record: 10-3 Big 12 record: 6-3 (T-3rd) Stadium: Floyd Casey Stadium (50,000)

Photo by Doug Holleman

"Our confidence is still high and we'll play with a chip on our shoulders. We'll build off last year."
— WR Lanear Sampson

BEARS at a GLANCE

COACH: Art Briles — At Baylor: 25-25, 4 years
OVERALL: 59-53, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Philip Montgomery
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Bennett

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Southwest Conference co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Terrance Williams, WR Tevin Reese, OG Cyril Richardson, C Ivory Wade, DE Tevin Elliott, NB Ahmad Dixon, CB K.J. Morton, K Aaron Jones

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Despite losing Heisman Trophy winner Robert Griffin III, Baylor's offense should be explosive again with Nick Florence stepping in at quarterback. He'll be surrounded by a deep receiving corps and a solid group of running backs. The Bears should have their deepest offensive line in Briles' five seasons.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Baylor must improve significantly on defense after allowing 488.5 yards and 37.2 points per game. The Bears must get more pressure on the quarterbacks after collecting just 19 sacks last year. Conference games at West Virginia, Texas and Oklahoma will be arduous.

OFFENSE

Senior Nick Florence will take over at quarterback for Heisman Trophy winner Robert Griffin III.

Florence, of course, doesn't have Griffin's athleticism or arm strength, but he's savvy and experienced, having played extensively in 2009 as an injury replacement.

With so many gifted players surrounding him, Florence won't feel overburdened. Terrance Williams leads a dynamic group of receivers after making 59 catches for 957 yards and 11 touchdowns last season.

Speedy Tevin Reese caught 51 passes for 877 yards and seven touchdowns, while Lanear Sampson made 42 catches for 572 yards and three touchdowns. Redshirt freshman Jay Lee is another big, fast receiver who looks like a future star.

After Terrance Ganaway rushed for a school-record 1,547 yards and 21 touchdowns as a senior last season, senior Jarred Salubi, junior Glasco Martin and sophomore Lache Seastrunk — an Oregon transfer — are vying for the starting running back spot.

The Bears should be strong again along the offensive line with center Ivory Wade and guards Cyril Richardson and Cameron Kaufhold returning. Highly-touted redshirt freshman Spencer Drango moves in at left tackle.

DEFENSE

After allowing 488.5 yards and 37.2 points per game last season, Baylor expects dramatic improvement.

The Bears return a veteran group of defensive ends. Gary Mason Jr., Tevin Elliott, Terrance Lloyd and Chris McAllister combined for 9.5 sacks last year, but should be much more productive this season.

Big things could come from senior nose guard Kaeron Johnson, who will move into the starting lineup along with senior defensive tackle Nick Johnson.

One of Baylor's biggest challenges will be replacing middle linebacker Elliot Coffey; sophomore Bryce Hager could be up to the task. He'll be joined by junior college transfer Eddie Lackey at outside linebacker and nickel back Ahmad Dixon, who will be one of the defensive leaders after collecting 89 tackles, three fumble recoveries and an interception last season.

Junior college transfers K.J. Morton and Joe Williams bailed out the Bears last season after four cornerbacks went down with injuries. Morton made a team-high four interceptions, and Williams recorded a team-high 13 passes defended.

Mike Hicks and Sam Holl are back at safety. They collected more than 100 tackles and three interceptions apiece last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Bears return kicker Aaron Jones and punter Spencer Roth and most of their return men, but they need dramatic improvement in kickoff coverage.

Jones struggled with consistency last year by hitting 10 of 17 field-goal attempts and 75 of 78 PATs. However, Briles likes his leg strength and demeanor. Roth delivered a solid freshman year with a 40.5-yard punting average.

OVERVIEW

Without Griffin, Baylor will have trouble matching last season's 10-3 record. But the Bears are confident they can reach a bowl game for the third straight year with a lot of offensive talent surrounding Florence and a veteran defense that should make great improvement in coordinator Phil Bennett's second season.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Lache Seastrunk: The sophomore transfer from Oregon gives Baylor a home run threat. He played behind senior Jarred Salubi and junior Glasco Martin during spring drills but is expected to see considerable action. Ran for a 75-yard TD in final spring scrimmage.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	Nick Florence	6-1	205	Sr.
RB	21	Jarred Salubi	5-9	210	Sr.
WR	**2**	**Terrance Williams***	**6-3**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	**16**	**Tevin Reese***	**5-10**	**165**	**Jr.**
WR	**3**	**Lanear Sampson***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
TE	**18**	**Jordan Najvar***	**6-6**	**260**	**Jr.**
LT	58	Spencer Drango	6-6	305	Fr.
LG	**68**	**Cyril Richardson***	**6-5**	**335**	**Jr.**
C	**78**	**Ivory Wade***	**6-4**	**310**	**Sr.**
RG	**71**	**Cameron Kaufhold***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
RT	75	Troy Baker	6-6	310	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	**10**	**Gary Mason Jr.***	**6-4**	**275**	**Sr.**
NG	49	Kaeron Johnson	6-2	305	Sr.
DT	76	Nick Johnson	6-2	295	Sr.
DE	**11**	**Terrance Lloyd***	**6-3**	**235**	**Jr.**
LB	40	Eddie Lackey	6-0	220	Jr.
LB	44	Bryce Hager	6-1	235	So.
NB	**6**	**Ahmad Dixon***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
CB	**8**	**K.J. Morton***	**5-10**	**175**	**Jr.**
CB	**22**	**Joe Williams***	**5-9**	**185**	**Jr.**
SS	**25**	**Sam Holl***	**6-1**	**195**	**Jr.**
FS	**17**	**Mike Hicks***	**5-11**	**195**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**43**	**Aaron Jones***	**6-3**	**190**	**Jr.**
P	**36**	**Spencer Roth***	**6-4**	**225**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	SMU
Sept. 15	SAM HOUSTON STATE
Sept. 22	at ULM
Sept. 29	at West Virginia
Oct. 13	TCU
Oct. 20	at Texas
Oct. 27	at Iowa State
Nov. 3	KANSAS
Nov. 10	at Oklahoma
Nov. 17	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 24	vs. Texas Tech (Arlington, TX)
Dec. 1	OKLAHOMA STATE

2011 RESULTS

W	TCU	50-48
W	STEPHEN F. AUSTIN	48-0
W	RICE	56-31
L	at Kansas State	35-36
W	IOWA STATE	49-26
L	at Texas A&M	28-55
L	at Oklahoma State	24-59
W	MISSOURI	42-39
W	at Kansas (OT)	31-30
W	OKLAHOMA	45-38
W	TEXAS TECH	66-42
W	TEXAS	48-24
	Alamo Bowl	
W	vs. Washington	67-56

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	45.3	4
Rushing	235.6	10
Passing	351.5	4
Total	587.1	2
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	37.2	113
Rushing	197.4	102
Pass	291.1	118
Total	488.5	116
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+5	+0.38	30

RANKING

58 IOWA STATE | CYCLONES

Big 12 rank: 9 Record: 6-7 Big 12 record: 3-6 (8th) Stadium: Jack Trice Stadium (55,000)

Photo by John Williamson

A.J. Klein

"Our football team recognizes the (quarterback) competition. I think everybody sees it as something that is healthy." — Coach Paul Rhoads

CYCLONES at a GLANCE

COACH: Paul Rhoads — At Iowa State and overall: 18-20, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Courtney Messingham
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Wally Burnham

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1912, Missouri Valley co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB James White, WR Josh Lenz, TE Ernst Brun, DE Roosevelt Maggitt, DE David Irving, LB Jake Knott, LB A.J. Klein

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: There are few better linebacking duos than Knott and Klein. Those two can make up for a lot of deficiencies with their tackling and playmaking ability. The Cyclones are deep at running back and receiver, and are well-stocked at those positions for the future.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: So many question marks along the defensive line. Maggitt is coming off injury and the interior has little depth. Two starters are gone from the offensive line, with Kelechi Osemele at left tackle the most glaring loss. And can ISU really count on a freshman field goal kicker?

OFFENSE

The big question: Who will emerge from the quarterback battle between Jared Barnett and Steele Jantz? Both started games last season and did some good things.

Neither is an unknown, but it will be interesting to see which way coach Paul Rhoads goes. The choice will set the tone for the season — one in which the Cyclones will have to show major offensive improvement to compete in the new-look Big 12.

Iowa State has virtually the same system with a new coordinator, Courtney Messingham, who was promoted from receivers coach when Tom Herman left for Ohio State. Messingham just wants to simplify some things.

There are good pieces at running back with James White and Jeff Woody, and even more if Shontrelle Johnson is cleared to return from a neck injury.

Senior Josh Lenz is the most accomplished receiver among a group of previously part-time contributors. Big, talented youngsters could see the field this season.

Two NFL-level linemen are gone, but good experience remains up front. Center Tom Farniok emerged as a solid player in his first season.

DEFENSE

The linebackers are among the best nationally, with All-Big 12 picks Jake Knott and A.J. Klein patrolling the field. But up front and on the back end, the defense lost some key starters.

Jacques Washington will again need to come up big from the safety spot, as he did in 2011, finishing third on the team in tackles. Jeremy Reeves is back at one cornerback spot, but it's anybody's guess who will be opposite him. Jansen Watson and Matt Thomas could end up splitting time at that spot.

On the line, Jake McDonough needs to be huge in the middle, and Cleyon Laing, Brandon Jensen and Henry Simon must prove they are tough enough to play in the trenches in the Big 12.

Coaches are encouraged by the potential of sophomore defensive end David Irving to impact games.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Kirby Van Der Kamp, who has averaged 43.1 yards for his career, will be the starter for a third season. True freshman Cole Netten likely will kick field goals; he's the only scholarship kicker on the roster. He doesn't have a particularly tough act to follow, as ISU was only 12 of 20 on field-goal attempts last year.

OVERVIEW

The quarterback question needs to be resolved quickly and decisively for Iowa State to reach its third bowl appearance in four seasons. There is enough talent on this roster to get to the postseason, but the Cyclones have to catch some breaks along the way with a Big 12 that isn't any less difficult with Texas A&M and Missouri now in the SEC.

Playmakers must emerge on both sides of the ball, especially in the passing game, as Iowa State tries to keep up in a league known for its offensive prowess.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Cory Morrissey: The local product grew up in Ames wanting to play at Iowa State. After a year at Iowa Western junior college improving his game and body, the 6-4, 240-pound pass rusher gets the chance he's dreamed about.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	7	Jared Barnett	6-1	199	So.
RB	**8**	**James White***	**5-8**	**187**	**Jr.**
WR	**19**	**Josh Lenz***	**6-0**	**194**	**Sr.**
WR	1	Jarvis West	5-7	165	So.
WR	**3**	**Aaron Horne***	**5-9**	**178**	**Sr.**
TE	84	Ernst Brun	6-3	240	Jr.
LT	71	Carter Bykowski	6-8	303	Sr.
LG	**64**	**Ethan Tuftee***	**6-4**	**318**	**Jr.**
C	**78**	**Tom Farniok***	**6-4**	**280**	**So.**
RG	65	Jacob Gannon	6-7	286	So.
RT	**79**	**Brayden Burris***	**6-6**	**298**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	38	Roosevelt Maggitt	6-3	246	Sr.
DT	**94**	**Jake McDonough***	**6-5**	**290**	**Sr.**
DT	90	Cleyon Laing	6-4	290	Sr.
DE	87	David Irving	6-7	262	So.
LB	**20**	**Jake Knott***	**6-3**	**239**	**Sr.**
LB	**47**	**A. J. Klein***	**6-2**	**244**	**Sr.**
LB	27	C. J. Morgan	6-3	213	So.
CB	**5**	**Jeremy Reeves***	**5-7**	**166**	**Sr.**
CB	2	Jansen Watson	5-9	184	Jr.
SS	24	Durrell Givens	6-0	211	Sr.
FS	**10**	**Jacques Washington***	**6-1**	**213**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Cole Netten	6-1	185	Fr.
P	**13**	**Kirby Van Der Kamp***	**6-4**	**203**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	TULSA
Sept. 8	at Iowa
Sept. 15	WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 29	TEXAS TECH
Oct. 6	at TCU
Oct. 13	KANSAS STATE
Oct. 20	at Oklahoma State
Oct. 27	BAYLOR
Nov. 3	OKLAHOMA
Nov. 10	at Texas
Nov. 17	at Kansas
Nov. 24	WEST VIRGINIA

2011 RESULTS

W	NORTHERN IOWA	20-19
W	IOWA (3OT)	44-41
W	at Connecticut	24-20
L	TEXAS	14-37
L	at Baylor	26-49
L	at Missouri	17-52
L	TEXAS A&M	17-33
W	at Texas Tech	41-7
W	KANSAS	13-10
W	OKLAHOMA STATE (2OT)	37-31
L	at Oklahoma	6-26
L	at Kansas State	23-30
	PINSTRIPE BOWL	
L	VS. Rutgers	13-27

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.7	90
Rushing	174.2	39
Passing	212.3	73
Total	386.5	60
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	29.4	82
Rushing	193.5	98
Pass	234.0	73
Total	427.5	95
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-11	-0.85	112

RANKING

89 KANSAS | JAYHAWKS

Big 12 rank: 10 Record: 2-10 Big 12 record: 0-9 (10th) Stadium: Memorial Stadium (50,071)

Photo by John Rieger-US PRESSWIRE

Bradley McDougald

"On defense, these kids coming in the summer, better be pretty good, because if they're not, then my hair is going to turn completely white in a hurry." — Coach Charlie Weis

JAYHAWKS at a GLANCE

COACH: Charlie Weis — At Kansas: 1st year
OVERALL: 35-27, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charlie Weis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Campo

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998, Big Eight co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2008, Insight
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Dayne Crist, RB Tony Pierson, LT Tanner Hawkinson, LG Duane Zlatnik, LB Michael Reynolds, LB Toben Opurum, LB Schyler Miles, CB Greg Brown

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Moving the football shouldn't be a problem with Crist running an offense he knows well, protected by an experienced line, and having Weis keeping defenses off balance with his play-calling. It also helps that there is a deep stable of running backs to bring a multi-dimensional attack.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense ranked last in total defense and scoring defense a year ago. Help is on the way with new coaches, a pair of fifth-year transfers and a talented freshman, but this remains a defense with average speed and below-average size.

OFFENSE

Now that natural leader and strong-armed pocket passer Dayne Crist is reunited with Charlie Weis — the coach who recruited him to Notre Dame — Kansas has its first high-level trigger man since Todd Reesing, although they are different sizes and have different styles.

Crist, who graduated from Notre Dame in December and transferred to Kansas, knows Weis' offense well and can make every variety of throw accurately.

Sophomore burner Tony Pierson (88-yard touchdown sprint in spring game) is too slender to be an every-down back, but Weis will make the most of his carries by having him strike at creative times. Pierson gets to full speed quickly and has that quick wiggle that enables him to elude tackles. Look for Weis to get him the ball through the air, as well.

An experienced offensive line led by senior all-conference candidates Tanner Hawkinson at left tackle and Duane Zlatnik at left guard should supply ample protection for Crist.

The receiving units lack a long, tall deep threat, unless junior college signee Josh Ford can become that guy, but Kansas does have a reliable possession target in Kale Pick and pair of short, fast, strong big-play men in D.J. Beshears and Daymond Patterson.

DEFENSE

Defensive coordinator Dave Campo, relieved of his coaching duties by the Dallas Cowboys, was coerced back onto the field by Weis. Considering the lack of talent Campo inherited, that just might qualify as one of the greatest recruiting jobs in history.

Kansas ranked last in the nation in total defense (516.4 yards per game) and points per game (43.8). It all started up front, where KU was unable to mount any pass rush.

Senior Toben Opurum and sophomore Michael Reynolds showed signs in the spring of developing into solid edge rushers. Weis made shoring up the line, especially in the middle, a priority. He signed three junior college defensive tackles and welcomed end Josh Williams into the program as a Nebraska graduate fifth-year senior.

Fifth-year Notre Dame grad Anthony McDonald and true freshman Schyler Miles should upgrade the linebacker position. An improved pass rush would equate to a better secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Alex Mueller, a kicking-camp standout, didn't show as much foot in games in 2011 and has lost his job to Ron Doherty, the team's punter.

Special teams coach Clint Bowen, back at his alma mater after serving as defensive coordinator at North Texas for two years, will have a wide array of experienced return men (Beshears, Patterson, Bradley McDougald) from which to choose.

OVERVIEW

It's not reasonable to expect a team that went 2-10 and was winless in the Big 12 to reach a bowl game after facing a brutal schedule. But winning four or five games isn't out of the question, thanks to a more organized coaching staff, a more demanding strength and conditioning program and a significant upgrade at quarterback.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Dayne Crist: He transferred at mid-year after graduating from Notre Dame, where he was recruited and initially coached by Charlie Weis. Crist is ready to get back under center again after having two ACL surgeries and falling out of favor with Irish coach Brian Kelly.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	Dayne Crist	6-4	235	Sr.
RB	3	Tony Pierson	5-10	170	So.
WR	**7**	**Kale Pick***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	**20**	**D.J. Beshears***	**5-9**	**185**	**Sr.**
WR	15	Daymond Patterson	5-8	178	Sr.
TE	41	Jimmay Mundine	6-2	240	So.
LT	**72**	**Tanner Hawkinson***	**6-5**	**295**	**Sr.**
LG	**67**	**Duane Zlatnik***	**6-4**	**311**	**Sr.**
C	**69**	**Trevor Marrongelli***	**6-3**	**300**	**Sr.**
RG	70	Gavin Howard	6-4	292	Jr.
RT	79	Riley Spencer	6-6	305	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**35**	**Toben Opurum***	**6-1**	**245**	**Sr.**
DT	N/A	Jordan Tavai	6-3	280	Jr.
DT	N/A	Ty McKinney	6-3	310	Jr.
DE	N/A	Josh Williams	6-4	260	Sr.
LB	N/A	Anthony McDonald	6-2	230	Sr.
LB	N/A	Schyler Miles	6-2	220	Fr.
LB	55	Michael Reynolds	6-1	226	So.
CB	**5**	**Greg Brown***	**5-10**	**185**	**Sr.**
CB	**33**	**Tyler Patmon***	**5-11**	**180**	**Jr.**
SS	1	Lubbock Smith	5-10	197	Sr.
FS	**24**	**Bradley McDougald***	**6-1**	**214**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	13	Ron Doherty	5-11	215	Jr.
P	**13**	**Ron Doherty***	**5-11**	**215**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 8	RICE
Sept. 15	TCU
Sept. 22	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 6	at Kansas State
Oct. 13	OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 20	at Oklahoma
Oct. 27	TEXAS
Nov. 3	at Baylor
Nov. 10	at Texas Tech
Nov. 17	IOWA STATE
Dec. 1	at West Virginia

2011 RESULTS

W	McNEESE STATE	42-24
W	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	45-42
L	at Georgia Tech	24-66
L	TEXAS TECH	34-45
L	at Oklahoma State	28-70
L	OKLAHOMA	17-47
L	KANSAS STATE	21-59
L	at Texas	0-43
L	at Iowa State	10-13
L	BAYLOR	30-31
L	at Texas A&M	7-61
L	MISSOURI	10-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.3	95
Rushing	159.4	57
Passing	167.4	101
Total	326.8	106
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	43.8	120
Rushing	239.1	117
Pass	277.3	110
Total	516.4	120
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-5	-0.42	91

PICKING **THE ACC**

A year later than anticipated, it's Florida State's time to shine

In retrospect, Florida State shouldn't have been expected to win the Atlantic Coast Conference last year. It was inexperienced at key spots, it failed to produce at others, and was attacked early and often by injuries.

A season later than expected, the Seminoles should finally regain the ACC throne for the first time since 2005. With 15 returning starters and another top 10 recruiting class on the way, they might have the seasoning and depth required to win the conference title.

Defending champion Clemson will have something to say about that, though, as it returns the conference's top quarterback (Tajh Boyd) and perhaps its best playmaker (Sammy Watkins). But will there be collateral damage to overcome from a humiliating 70-33 Orange Bowl loss to West Virginia?

While there will be a two-team fight for the Atlantic Division title, it'll be another helping of Hokie dominance atop the Coastal. Although the offensive line is under reconstruction, Virginia Tech returns quarterback Logan Thomas and what could be the best defense in Bud Foster's 18 years as coordinator.

ATLANTIC DIVISION

Clemson coach Dabo Swinney stepped to the podium after last year's rout of Virginia Tech in the ACC title game and crowed that he was taking his talents to South Beach.

But in the Orange Bowl, he and the Tigers flopped worse than LeBron James in the NBA Finals, suffering the kind of loss that not only embarrasses a team on the spot, but can linger into the next season.

With the talent on this roster, Clemson can repeat as ACC champs, but it will have to get used to wearing a bullseye again. And it will likely have to extract a win from Doak Campbell Stadium Sept. 22, when it plays Florida State.

Both the Tigers and Seminoles should be leery of NC State, which looks like a sleeper team with the return of quarterback Mike Glennon and four offensive linemen.

Wake Forest can't be overlooked, while Boston College suffered a blow after sping ball when running back Montel Harris was kicked off the team. Randy Edsall is already on the hot seat after a 2-10 debut at Maryland.

ACC Picks

ATLANTIC	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Florida State	Defense has a chance to be super and offense is dotted with game-breakers.	The offensive line still has plenty of questions and no one's emerged at tailback.	A year later than anticipated, the Seminoles finally return to the ACC's top.
2. Clemson	The ACC's most explosive offense returns Tajh Boyd and Sammy Watkins.	West Virginia just scored again on the Tigers; defense must be shored up.	Clemson falls short of ACC title this year and fans resume sniping at Dabo Swinney.
3. NC State	Mike Glennon might be the ACC's most underrated quarterback.	All three linebackers and two starting wide receivers were lost to graduation.	Don't sleep on the Wolfpack if you're looking for a dark horse in the ACC.
4. Wake Forest	Tanner Price is back for his third season as the Demon Deacons' QB.	Go-to WR Chris Givens left for the NFL, taking the big play out of the passing game.	Well-coached Wake will contend ... but it falls a few five-star players short.
5. Boston College	Offense returns much more experience and should improve from bad to decent.	ACC Defensive Player of the Year Luke Kuechly is irreplaceable at linebacker.	Having TB Montel Harris would have been nice; looks like a long year.
6. Maryland	DL Joe Vellano might be the ACC's best defensive player.	Who's left in town after 25 players bid farewell following a disastrous 2011?	Another 2-10 season and coach Randy Edsall might not be around for 2013.
COASTAL			
1. Virginia Tech	This could be the best defense in Bud Foster's 18 years as coordinator.	The O-line has four new starters and looked shaky in spring practice.	If the line can at least be decent, the Hokies will be back in the ACC title game.
2. Virginia	Cavaliers return seven starters on offense, including RB Perry Jones.	They must replace seven starters on defense and have few impact players there.	In two years, coach Mike London has made major strides to rebuild program.
3. Georgia Tech	Four starters back on O-line, meaning offense should control ball on ground.	Yellow Jackets might not have enough playmakers on defense to stop ACC's best.	Experience up front makes this team a sleeper in the Coastal.
4. North Carolina	Offense has a chance to be really good with seven returning starters.	Defense might be pretty ordinary with seven starters gone.	Another new system means another middle-of-the-pack finish for Tar Heels.
5. Miami	Hurricanes should be good defensively and in the kicking game.	The offense looked ragged in the spring and might not look much better in the fall.	Good thing coach Al Golden's deal runs through 2020. This could be a tough year.
6. Duke	Blue Devils have experience up front and could have their best O-line in years.	Once again, the defense still doesn't have enough athletes to consistently win.	Schedule might be too tough for Duke to make its first bowl game since 1994.

COASTAL DIVISION

Four offensive linemen and the school's single-season rushing leader departed, but few are weeping for Virginia Tech.

That's because the Hokies return nine starters from a defense that looks beastly. They also welcome back junior quarterback Logan Thomas, who has an NFL arm but will have to carry more of the load this year.

Virginia made a surprising run to second in the division last year and could have a chance to challenge its in-state rival again, but the Cavs have rebuilding to do on defense. Georgia Tech returns four starting offensive linemen and should be able to control the clock with its triple-option running attack.

North Carolina has a first-year coach (Larry Fedora) and good personnel on offense, but questions on defense. Miami could possess its most impotent offense in decades. As for Duke, the offense could be good, but the defense might not have enough playmakers to win games.

— Bucky Dent

Most Valuable Player

Tajh Boyd
QB, Clemson

Offensive Player of the Year

Sammy Watkins
WR, Clemson

Defensive Player of the Year

Brandon Jenkins
DE, Florida State

Newcomer of the Year

Duke Johnson
RB, Miami

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Bryn Renner	North Carolina
Strongest arm	Logan Thomas	Virginia Tech
Best scrambler	Tajh Boyd	Clemson
Coolest in the clutch	EJ Manuel	Florida State
Toughest to bring down	Giovani Bernard	North Carolina
Best hands	Conner Vernon	Duke
Most dangerous deep threat	Sammy Watkins	Clemson
Best pass blocker	Oday Aboushi	Virginia
Best run blocker	Omoregie Uzzi	Georgia Tech
Best cover corner	Merrill Noel	Wake Forest
Best pass rusher	Brandon Jenkins	Florida State
Special teams demon	Greg Reid	Florida State

Lindy's 2012 ALL-ACC Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Tajh Boyd	Jr.	Clemson
RB	Giovani Bernard	So.	North Carolina
RB	Andre Ellington	Sr.	Clemson
WR	Sammy Watkins	So.	Clemson
WR	DeAndre Hopkins	Jr.	Clemson
TE	Matt Furstenburg	Sr.	Maryland
C	Dalton Freeman	Sr.	Clemson
OL	Omoregie Uzzi	Sr.	Georgia Tech
OL	Jonathan Cooper	Sr.	North Carolina
OL	Oday Aboushi	Sr.	Virginia
OL	James Hurst	Jr.	North Carolina
AP	Greg Reid	Jr.	Florida State
K	Dustin Hopkins	Sr.	Florida State

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Logan Thomas	Jr.	Virginia Tech
RB	Perry Jones	Sr.	Virginia
RB	Devonta Freeman	So.	Florida State
WR	Conner Vernon	Sr.	Duke
WR	Erik Highsmith	Sr.	North Carolina
TE	Chris Pantale	Sr.	Boston College
C	Andrew Miller	Jr.	Virginia Tech
OL	Zach Allen	Sr.	NC State
OL	Brandon Linder	Jr.	Miami
OL	R.J. Mattes	Sr.	NC State
OL	Morgan Moses	Jr.	Virginia
AP	Michael Campanaro	Jr.	Wake Forest
K	Casey Barth	Sr.	North Carolina

OFFENSE - THIRD TEAM

QB	EJ Manuel	Sr.	Florida State
RB	Orwin Smith	Sr.	Georgia Tech
RB	Andre Williams	Jr.	Boston College
WR	Rashad Greene	So.	Florida State
WR	Marcus Davis	Sr.	Virginia Tech
TE	Colter Phillips	Sr.	Virginia
C	Camden Wentz	Sr.	NC State
OL	Will Jackson	Jr.	Georgia Tech
OL	Laken Tomlinson	So.	Duke
OL	Emmett Cleary	Sr.	Boston College
OL	Perry Simmons	Jr.	Duke
AP	T.J. Thorpe	So.	North Carolina
K	Chandler Catanzaro	Jr.	Clemson

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Brandon Jenkins	Sr.	Florida State
DL	James Gayle	Jr.	Virginia Tech
DL	Joe Vellano	Sr.	Maryland
DL	Nikita Whitlock	Jr.	Wake Forest
LB	Steve Greer	Sr.	Virginia
LB	Kenny Tate	Sr.	Maryland
LB	Kevin Reddick	Sr.	North Carolina
DB	Merrill Noel	So.	Wake Forest
DB	David Amerson	Jr.	NC State
DB	Lamarcus Joyner	Jr.	Florida State
DB	Xavier Rhodes	Jr.	Florida State
P	Dalton Botts	Sr.	Miami

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

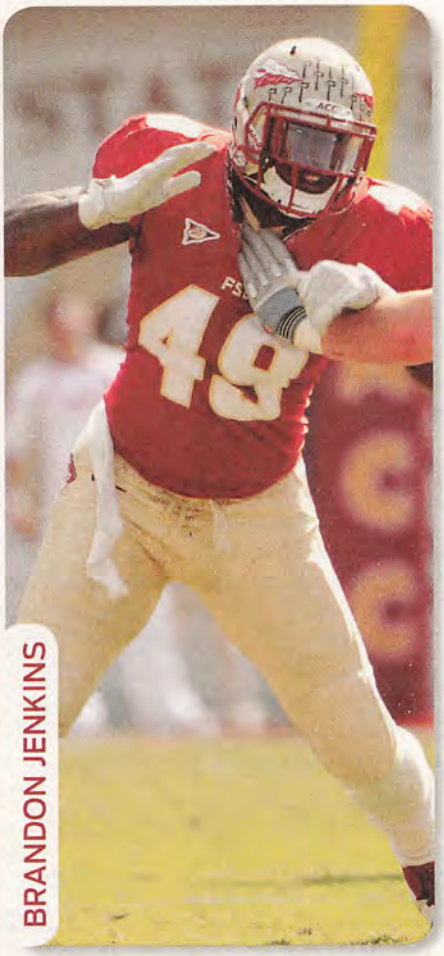
DL	J.R. Collins	Jr.	Virginia Tech
DL	Bjoern Werner	Jr.	Florida State
DL	Everett Dawkins	Sr.	Florida State
DL	Derrick Hopkins	Jr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Tariq Edwards	Jr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Bruce Taylor	Sr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Kevin Pierre-Louis	Jr.	Boston College
DB	Kyle Fuller	Jr.	Virginia Tech
DB	Rod Sweeting	Sr.	Georgia Tech
DB	Rashard Hall	Sr.	Clemson
DB	Earl Wolff	Sr.	NC State
P	Alex Wulfeck	Jr.	Wake Forest

DEFENSE - THIRD TEAM

DL	Anthony Chickillo	So.	Miami
DL	Kareem Martin	Jr.	North Carolina
DL	Sylvester Williams	Sr.	North Carolina
DL	Kaleb Ramsey	Sr.	Boston College
LB	Christian Jones	Jr.	Florida State
LB	LaRoy Reynolds	Sr.	Virginia
LB	Jeremiah Attaochu	Jr.	Georgia Tech
DB	Antone Exum	Jr.	Virginia Tech
DB	Jemea Thomas	Jr.	Georgia Tech
DB	Jim Noel	Sr.	Boston College
DB	Isaiah Johnson	Jr.	Georgia Tech
P	Nick Ferrera	Sr.	Maryland

THE **BIG** ONES

Aug. 31 Tennessee vs. NC State (Atlanta)	Wolfpack start Chick-fil-A Kickoff weekend in Atlanta against Volunteers.
Sept. 1 Auburn vs. Clemson (Atlanta)	Could this be the start of Sammy Watkins' Heisman Trophy campaign?
Sept. 3 Georgia Tech at Virginia Tech	Winner of this game has won the Coastal Division title for seven straight years.
Sept. 8 Miami at Kansas State North Carolina at Wake Forest	Tough assignment for Hurricanes against Collin Klein, Wildcats in Manhattan. Could be a shootout between QBs Bryn Renner and Tanner Price.
Sept. 15 Virginia at Georgia Tech Connecticut at Maryland	Cavaliers used Yellow Jackets as springboard to surprising success in 2011. Does Randy Edsall look at Huskies' sideline and wish he had stayed?
Sept. 22 Clemson at Florida State Virginia at TCU	League's two best teams could decide Atlantic Division title in Tallahassee. Cavaliers hit the road to play one of the Big 12 newcomers.
Sept. 29 Florida State at South Florida	Trap game for Seminoles against a Bulls squad that lives for these situations.
Oct. 6 Miami vs. Notre Dame (Chicago) Virginia Tech at North Carolina	This would have been a great game ... 20 years ago. Hokies shooting for their 11th straight ACC road win, dating to 2009.
Oct. 13 North Carolina at Miami	Matchup of schools either in or about to be in the NCAA slammer.
Oct. 20 Virginia Tech at Clemson Florida State at Miami	Rematch of ACC title game that Tigers dominated in the second half. Remember the days when this game decided national championships?
Oct. 27 NC State at North Carolina	Wolfpack have owned this series since Tom O'Brien took the program over.
Nov. 1 Virginia Tech at Miami	The kings of Thursday night start a tough November in south Florida.
Nov. 3 Virginia at NC State	If teams play up to potential, this could have ACC title game implications.
Nov. 8 Florida State at Virginia Tech	Seminoles get their first taste of Thursday night in Lane Stadium.
Nov. 10 Georgia Tech at North Carolina	Tar Heels have had real trouble with triple-option in past three years.
Nov. 15 North Carolina at Virginia	Short week for both teams as they play Thursday in Charlottesville.
Nov. 17 NC State at Clemson	Tigers remember the 37-6 pasting the Wolfpack put on them last year.
Nov. 24 South Carolina at Clemson Florida at Florida State Virginia at Virginia Tech	Bitter rivalry means more with both teams relevant on a national scale. No matter the teams' records, this is a game worth seeing every year. Coastal Division title hopes figure to be on the line for Hokies and Cavaliers.



BRANDON JENKINS

Photo by Melina Vastola-US PRESSWIRE

BOWL CONNECTIONS

ACC Champion
BCS (national title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Orange)

ACC #2 Chick-fil-A vs. SEC
ACC #3 Champs Sports Bowl vs. Big East
ACC #4 Sun Bowl vs. Pac-12
ACC #5 Belk Bowl vs. Big East
ACC #6 Music City vs. SEC
ACC #7 Independence vs. MWC
ACC #8 Military Bowl vs. Navy/TBA
ACC #9 Kraft Fight Hunter Bowl (conditional agreement)

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Brandon Jenkins	DE	Sr.	Florida State	Occupies prominent spot in opposition's game plans.
2. Bjoern Werner	DE	Jr.	Florida State	Native of Berlin is simply bull-strong; tough vs. the run.
3. David Amerson	CB	Jr.	NC State	Terrific ballhawk led NCAA in interceptions last year.
4. Logan Thomas	QB	Jr.	Virginia Tech	Cam Newton comparisons apply to size and skill set.
5. DeAndre Hopkins	WR	Jr.	Clemson	Has the athleticism needed and a lot of room to improve.
6. Kevin Reddick	LB	Sr.	North Carolina	Pro scouts have come to love UNC defenders.
7. Oday Aboushi	OT	Sr.	Virginia	Arguably the top O-lineman in ACC, keys Cavs' run game.
8. Xavier Rhodes	CB	Jr.	Florida State	Lacks size, but possesses great quickness and technique.
9. Kenny Tate	LB	Sr.	Maryland	If knee is healthy, could be a playmaking S at the next level.
10. Kareem Martin	DE	Jr.	North Carolina	Could be latest NFL-ready rush end for this program.

By Mike Farrell | Rivals.com

ACC RECRUITING

1. FLORIDA STATE: Once again the Seminoles are at the top of the heap in the ACC. Florida State is bringing in an embarrassment of riches on the defensive line with five-stars Mario Edwards and Eddie Goldman leading the way. There are plenty of other talented pass-rushers in this group. Five-star quarterback Jameis Winston will be playing baseball in addition to football and he could be a great pro in either sport.

2. MIAMI: There are 33 commitments in this class and impressive depth across the board. The Hurricanes absolutely loaded up in the secondary and they appear to have found plenty of ball-hawks that will make life tough for opposing QBs in the ACC. Five-star Tracy Howard is the nation's best corner prospect and Randy Johnson is as shifty as they come at running back.

3. CLEMSON: The Tigers continue to flex their muscles on the recruiting trail, though there weren't as many elite talents in this year's class as there were last year. They signed three of the Palmetto State's top ten prospects and did good work in North Carolina, as well. Four-star safety Travis Blanks is the latest Florida standout to pick Clemson, which keeps a growing tradition alive.

4. VIRGINIA TECH: On paper, this is one of Frank Beamer's better classes at Virginia Tech, due in large part to their success late with the additions of Joel Caleb and Ken Ekanem, two of the top athletes in the state. The Hokies loaded up at running back with commitments from J.C. Coleman, Chris Mangus and Drew Harris. Virginia Tech signed five of the top 10 in the state and 11 of the top 20.

5. VIRGINIA: For a while it didn't look like this class would amount to much, but a summer surge made it good enough for the upper half of the league. Quarterback Greyson Lambert was a surprise, as was receiver Canaan Severin, and both are big-time talents. The defensive class is really impressive because of defensive ends Eli Harold and Michael Moore, two four-star prospects among the best at their position nationally.

6. NORTH CAROLINA: The Tar Heels had a lot going against them in this class. New head coach Larry Fedora and his staff had to build relationships quickly and they were also recruiting against sanctions that everyone knew would be coming. However, the Heels still got four-star quarterback James Summers to switch from NC State late.

7. MARYLAND: Frankly, this was an unspectacular class until the late addition of five-star receiver Stefon Diggs. A local talent, Diggs could have gone to any school in the nation, but he opted for comfort and familiarity in choosing the Terrapins. Four-star running back Wes Brown is another in-state prospect that most anyone else would have loved to land, so the Terps finished very strong.

8. DUKE: The Blue Devils aren't going to get a lot of attention nationally, but David Cutcliffe does one of the better recruiting jobs year in and year out in Durham. They don't carry a lot of weight in their home state, so once again it was a national effort. Running back is where they found a lot of success this year. Nevada's Shaquille Powell is a four-star and local running back Jela Duncan was highly regarded, as well.

9. NC STATE: It was a typical recruiting effort for the Wolfpack. There aren't a ton of elite athletes, but they addressed needs and found guys that will fit Tom O'Brien's system. Like North Carolina, NC State will have to do better in its home state in the future. Tyler Knox and David Grinnage are a pair of impressive prospects and there's some really quality defensive line talent in this group as well.

10. GEORGIA TECH: This wasn't one of the Yellow Jackets' better efforts, but there is some good defensive talent. Defensive end Francis Kallon has only played football one year and started picking up offers before he ever even played a game. He's got a high ceiling. Four-star athlete Justin Thomas is another good player and a former Alabama commitment. Tech hit the state of Alabama pretty hard and did nearly all of its work in the Deep South.

11. BOSTON COLLEGE: The strength of this class is at linebacker and on the offensive line. Win Homer was the best offensive lineman in Virginia, while Jim Cashman and Frank Taylor are big-time line prospects as well. Linebackers Steven Daniels and Mike Strizak are two really impressive players. Tight end Michael Giacone defected from Rutgers late after Greg Schiano departed for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

12. WAKE FOREST: Jim Grobe and his staff always hit Florida hard and this year was no exception. The Demon Deacons signed eight prospects from the Sunshine State. Quarterback Tyler Cameron is one of the nation's better dual-threat quarterbacks and one of the top incoming signal callers in the ACC. Linebacker Dominique Gibson, also from Florida, may be undersized, but it a great athlete with an impressive motor.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Mario Edwards	6-4/275	DT	Denton (Texas) Ryan	Florida State
2.	Eddie Goldman	6-4/307	DT	Washington (D.C.) Friendship Collegiate	Florida State
3.	Stefon Diggs	6-0/185	WR	Olney (Md.) Good Counsel	Maryland
4.	Jameis Winston	6-4/200	QB	Hueytown (Ala.) High	Florida State
5.	Tracy Howard	5-11/175	CB	Miramar (Fla.) High	Miami
6.	Randy Johnson	5-9/180	RB	Miami (Fla.) Norland	Miami
7.	Chris Casher	6-4/225	DE	Mobile (Ala.) Davidson	Florida State
8.	Mario Pender	6-0/185	RB	Cape Coral (Fla.) Island Coast	Florida State
9.	Ukeme Eligwe	6-3/210	LB	Stone Mountain (Ga.) High	Florida State
10.	Eli Harold	6-4/215	DE	Virginia Beach (Va.) Ocean Lakes	Virginia
11.	Travis Blanks	6-1/195	S	Tallahassee (Fla.) North Florida Christian	Clemson
12.	Ronald Darby	5-11/172	CB	Oxon Hill (Md.) Potomac	Florida State
13.	Germone Hopper	6-0/165	WR	Charlotte (N.C.) Phillip O Berry	Clemson
14.	Deon Bush	6-1/185	S	Miami (Fla.) Columbus	Miami
15.	Joel Caleb	6-2/201	ATH	Midlothian (Va.) Clover Hill	Virginia Tech
16.	Kwontie Moore	6-2/243	LB	Norfolk (Va.) Norfolk Christian School	Virginia
17.	Tyriq McCord	6-3/222	DE	Tampa (Fla.) Jefferson	Miami
18.	Raphael Kirby	6-0/208	LB	Stone Mountain (Ga.) Stephenson	Miami
19.	J.C. Coleman	5-7/169	RB	Chesapeake (Va.) Oscar Smith	Virginia Tech
20.	Carlos Watkins	6-4/275	DT	Forest City (N.C.) Chase	Clemson

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR: STEFON DIGGS

Stefon Diggs was exactly what Maryland was looking for. The five-star recruit surprised most when he decided to stay close to home and help out the local program after letting Signing Day pass without making his choice. Diggs is an elite athlete and a home-run threat that Randy Edsall and his staff will feature from Day 1.

TOP SLEEPER: FRANCIS KALLON

Future Yellow Jacket defensive end Francis Kallon received a lot of publicity for picking up offers before ever playing a down of football, while NC State's Desmond Owino was in a similar situation. Owino moved to the United States from Africa before his senior year and made the transition from rugby to football look easy.

LIKELY TO BE BEST NFL PLAYER: MARIO EDWARDS JR.

That award goes to Denton (Texas) Ryan defensive tackle Mario Edwards Jr., who is heading to Florida State. There aren't too many 6-4, 275-pound football players that move as well as Edwards in terms of agility, quickness and speed. He explodes off the ball, occupies multiple blockers and can dominate in pass-rush situations or against the run.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP: TRACY HOWARD

Miami was going to have a good recruiting year regardless of what Tracy Howard decided to do, but his commitment gave the Canes a huge boost. The Miramar, Fla., defensive back was a U.S. Army All-American, the No. 1 cornerback in the country and he picked off 10 passes as a senior, showing that he can actually produce.

BIGGEST MISS: AKEEL LYNCH

Akeel Lynch may have just been a three-star prospect, but the New York running back was a huge loss for Boston College. For starters, Boston College had a chance to make a run at a couple of other talented running backs, but Lynch was committed and that could have hurt their chances with others. Ultimately Lynch de-committed late in the process and switched to Penn State.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF: FLORIDA STATE

It's tough to argue for anyone other than Florida State this year. For starters, the Seminoles led the ACC with the No. 6 class in the nation, in spite of the fact that they signed just 19 players. Wide receivers coach Lawrence Dawsey had a big hand in the recruitment of five-star defensive linemen Eddie Goldman and Mario Edwards as well as four-star athlete Reggie Northrup. As much talent as there is in Florida, 13 of Florida State's 19 commitments came from outside the state.

RANKING

8 FLORIDA STATE | SEMINOLES

ACC rank: 1 Record: 9-4 ACC record: 5-3 (T-2nd, Atlantic) Stadium: Doak Campbell Stadium (82,300)

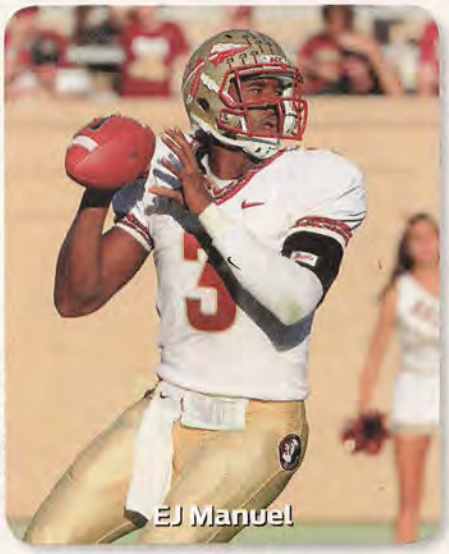


Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

"He's athletic. He's long, strong; he bends. He's smart, instinctive. He's got a chance to be very, very good."
— Coach Jimbo Fisher, on new LT Cameron Erving

SEMINOLES at a GLANCE

COACH: Jimbo Fisher — At FSU and overall: 19-8, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: James Coley
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Stoops

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1981
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB EJ Manuel, WR Rashad Greene, LT Cameron Erving, DE Brandon Jenkins, DE Bjoern Werner, LB Christian Jones, CB Greg Reid, PK Dustin Hopkins

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive line and receiving corps are expected to be among the nation's elite. The units mix talent with impressive depth, giving the coaching staff welcomed flexibility when it comes to game planning. Manuel is determined to be better in his second season as a full-time starter and says he knows the playbook inside and out.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line was awful last season, in large part due to injuries and inexperience. If the line struggles, look for history to repeat itself — the running game barely challenged opponents last season. True freshman Cason Beatty, an early enrollee, steps in at punter.

OFFENSE

Quarterback EJ Manuel worked on improving his passing touch and accuracy this spring.

A redshirt senior, Manuel is 13-4 as a starter and is considered one of the program's best leaders. Yet, much like FSU in recent years, he hasn't fulfilled expectations and struggled behind a porous offensive line last season.

A dual threat who can scramble when needed despite his size, Manuel says he has a better grasp of the offense and feels comfortable in coach Jimbo Fisher's system.

Five of the top six receivers return, headlined by the explosive Rashad Greene. He had a team-high 597 receiving yards and seven touchdowns despite missing three games with an injured ankle.

The line, besieged by injuries and inexperience last season, remains a work in progress. Cameron Erving, a converted defensive tackle who had never played offense before, emerged from spring drills as the starter at left tackle.

The running game, ranked among the nation's worst last season behind its weak line, also expects to be improved. Small but speedy sophomore Devonta Freeman had a team-high 579 yards and eight touchdowns.

DEFENSE

Coordinator Mark Stoops' unit ranked among the nation's best last season and is stacked with returning players and others who split time a year ago.

Ranked fourth nationally in total defense last season, the unit's strength — much like a year ago — is along the line.

Ends Brandon Jenkins, who nearly opted for the NFL following his junior season, and Bjoern Werner combined for 15 sacks, 23 tackles for loss and 78 tackles last season.

The interior's rotation features as many as six players, and the group is paced by steady senior and two-year starter Everett Dawkins.

FSU must replace NFL-bound Nigel Bradham, the team's leading tackler the past three seasons, but the starting trio of Christian Jones, Nick Moody and Vince Williams will rely on its superb quickness and physical skills. Moody played strong safety last season.

The experienced secondary is led by cornerbacks Xavier Rhodes and Greg Reid, also one of the country's top punt returners. Rhodes, an All-ACC selection, is considered the league's top cover corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Dustin Hopkins, a finalist for the Lou Groza Award last season, converted 22 of 27 field-goal attempts. Freshman Cason Beatty, an early enrollee, replaces graduated All-American punter Shawn Powell, who led the country with a 47-yard average. Beatty struggled in the spring game, but was considered one of the nation's top punters coming out of high school.

Greg Reid averaged nearly 12 yards per punt return; Larmarcus Joyner handled a majority of the kickoff returns and averaged 30.5 yards per return.

OVERVIEW

While Fisher has made progress, winning 19 games in two seasons, FSU failed to fulfill expectations last season following a top-five preseason ranking. The Seminoles haven't won the ACC and appeared in a BCS game since 2005 ... but the pieces are in place for Fisher to make good on the promise of the program's potential.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Kelvin Benjamin: The tall, rangy (6-6, 242) redshirt freshman combines leaping ability with body control, and teammates and coaches raved about his big plays in spring practice. QB EJ Manuel said throwing to Benjamin down field was like throwing an alley-oop to LeBron James.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	**EJ Manuel***	6-5	238	Sr.
RB	8	**Devonta Freeman***	5-8	200	So.
RB	24	**Lonnie Pryor***	6-0	229	Sr.
WR	80	**Rashad Greene***	6-0	175	So.
WR	84	**Rodney Smith***	6-6	219	Sr.
TE	35	**Nick O'Leary***	6-4	240	So.
LT	75	Cameron Erving	6-5	304	So.
LG	70	Josue Matias	6-5	320	So.
C	62	Austin Barron	6-3	295	So.
RG	54	Tre' Jackson	6-4	325	So.
RT	52	**Bryan Stork***	6-4	307	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	4	**Brandon Jenkins***	6-3	260	Sr.
DT	8	Timmy Jernigan	6-3	301	So.
DT	93	**Everett Dawkins***	6-2	301	Sr.
DE	95	**Bjoern Werner***	6-4	272	Jr.
LB	7	**Christian Jones***	6-4	237	Jr.
LB	10	Nick Moody	6-2	224	Sr.
LB	11	Vince Williams	6-1	247	Sr.
CB	5	**Greg Reid***	5-8	185	Sr.
CB	27	**Xavier Rhodes***	6-2	209	Jr.
SS	20	**Lamarcus Joyner***	5-8	193	Jr.
FS	31	Terrence Brooks	5-11	195	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	18	**Dustin Hopkins***	6-2	190	Sr.
P	38	Cason Beatty	6-3	235	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	MURRAY STATE
Sept. 8	SAVANNAH STATE
Sept. 15	WAKE FOREST
Sept. 22	CLEMSON
Sept. 29	at South Florida
Oct. 6	at NC State
Oct. 13	BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 20	at Miami
Oct. 27	DUKE
Nov. 8	at Virginia Tech
Nov. 17	at Maryland
Nov. 24	FLORIDA

2011 RESULTS

W	ULM	34-0
W	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	62-10
L	OKLAHOMA	13-23
L	at Clemson	30-35
L	at Wake Forest	30-35
W	at Duke	41-16
W	MARYLAND	41-16
W	NC STATE	34-0
W	at Boston College	38-7
W	MIAMI	23-19
L	VIRGINIA	13-14
W	at Florida	21-7
	Champs Sports Bowl	
W	vs. Notre Dame	18-14

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.6	39
Rushing	112.2	104
Passing	257.0	33
Total	369.2	77
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	15.1	4
Rushing	82.7	2
Pass	192.3	20
Total	275.0	4
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.31	37

RANKING

13 CLEMSON | TIGERS

ACC rank: 2 Record: 10-4 ACC record: 6-2 (1st, Atlantic) Stadium: Clemson Memorial (81,473)

Sammy Watkins

Photo by Joe Robbins

"There are still some things I need to work on. That's a big part of why I came back."

— RB Andre Ellington

TIGERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Dabo Swinney — At Clemson and overall: 29-19, 3-plus seasons
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chad Morris
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Venables

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tajh Boyd, RB Andre Ellington, WR Sammy Watkins, WR DeAndre Hopkins, DE Malliciah Goodman, LB Stephone Anthony, CB Bashaud Breeland

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Hard to see this offense not putting up a lot of points if it gets some answers on the offensive line. Morris will push the tempo even more in his second year, and Boyd, Watkins and others should be more comfortable and confident with a year of experience. Ellington is an elite back when healthy, and the receiving corps ranks among the best in the country.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: All of the talent at the skill positions doesn't mean as much if you can't control the line of scrimmage, and the Tigers have major questions up front on both sides of the ball. If injuries strike on the offensive and defensive lines, it could make for a dire situation.

OFFENSE

The offense totaled just eight turnovers over an 8-0 start last season, but racked up 16 as the Tigers lost four of their final six. Nine of those giveaways were interceptions thrown by Tajh Boyd, who needs to improve his pocket presence and decision-making in Year 2 as the starting quarterback.

Offensive line is a major question mark after losing a large number of veterans from a group that struggled last season. Aside from center Dalton Freeman and left tackle Brandon Thomas, there's precious little experience up front.

Having a healthy Sammy Watkins and Andre Ellington will help the offense rediscover the prolific form of the first eight games. Watkins suffered a shoulder injury in the ninth game and was seldom the same. He was facing misdemeanor charges in May for possession of marijuana and a controlled substance. Ellington, a tailback returning for his senior season, suffered an ankle injury in the eighth game and took a few weeks to recover.

It's hard to find a better group of receivers than this one. Veteran DeAndre Hopkins is first-team All-ACC material. Jaron Brown is an excellent No. 3 receiver, and Martavis Bryant and Charone Peake could blossom this season.

DEFENSE

Brent Venables replaces Kevin Steele, whose 2011 defense had a startling habit of making mediocre offenses look suddenly lethal.

There's almost no experience on the interior line after the departure of Brandon Thompson and Rennie Moore. Andre Branch is no longer making plays at defensive end, though the Tigers should be OK at those two positions as long as Malliciah Goodman and Corey Crawford stay healthy.

One of the big complaints about Steele's defense was that it was too complicated and overwhelmed the players mentally. No such complaints about Venables' style, which Dabo Swinney says incorporates more zone and is simpler.

The Tigers have quite a bit of talent and depth at linebacker, and this could be a breakout year for sophomore Stephone Anthony.

The secondary lost its best cover corner in Coty Sensabaugh, and veteran safety Rashard Hall spent the spring trying to mend an injured knee. But Jonathan Meeks is a potential star at safety, and veteran Xavier Brewer can play anywhere in the secondary.

Keep an eye on talented corners Bashaud Breeland, Darius Robinson and freshman Travis Blanks.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Chandler Catanzaro redeemed himself in 2011 after missing several big field-goal attempts in his first year as the placekicker. The Tigers lose punter Dawson Zimmerman, but freshman Bradley Pinion has a powerful leg he showed off during the spring after enrolling early.

Sammy Watkins, who dazzled returning kickoffs last year, will return more punts in 2012.

OVERVIEW

A large portion of last year's roster was composed of freshmen and sophomores, so there's a lot of momentum and a lot of reason to think this program can win another ACC title this year. The defense should be significantly improved — can't get much worse — and the offense will be tough to stop.

TOP NEWCOMER

DB Travis Blanks: Enrolled early and immediately caught the eye of new defensive coordinator Brent Venables because of his versatility and work ethic. Blanks could begin the season as the starting nickel back.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**10**	**Tajh Boyd***	**6-1**	**225**	**Jr.**
RB	**23**	**Andre Ellington***	**5-10**	**190**	**Sr.**
WR	**6**	**DeAndre Hopkins***	**6-1**	**200**	**Jr.**
WR	**2**	**Sammy Watkins***	**6-1**	**200**	**So.**
WR	**18**	**Jaron Brown***	**6-2**	**200**	**Sr.**
TE	80	Brandon Ford	6-4	235	Sr.
LT	**98**	**Brandon Thomas***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
LG	67	Kalon Davis	6-5	335	So.
C	**55**	**Dalton Freeman***	**6-5**	**285**	**Sr.**
RG	43	Tyler Shatley	6-3	295	Jr.
RT	70	Gifford Timothy	6-6	315	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	**97**	**Malliciah Goodman***	**6-4**	**280**	**Sr.**
DT	99	DeShawn Williams	6-1	290	So.
DT	6	Tavaris Barnes	6-4	270	So.
DE	93	Corey Crawford	6-5	280	So.
LB	**46**	**Jonathan Willard***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	12	Stephone Anthony	6-4	275	So.
LB	**34**	**Quandon Christian***	**6-2**	**220**	**Jr.**
CB	**29**	**Xavier Brewer***	**5-11**	**190**	**Sr.**
CB	**17**	**Bashaud Breeland***	**6-0**	**185**	**So.**
SS	**5**	**Jonathan Meeks***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
FS	**31**	**Rashard Hall***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**39**	**Chandler Catanzaro***	**6-2**	**200**	**Jr.**
P	41	Bradley Pinion	6-5	220	Fr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Auburn (Atlanta)
Sept. 8	BALL STATE
Sept. 15	FURMAN
Sept. 22	at Florida State
Sept. 29	at Boston College
Oct. 6	GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 20	VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 25	at Wake Forest
Nov. 3	at Duke
Nov. 10	MARYLAND
Nov. 17	NC STATE
Nov. 24	SOUTH CAROLINA

2011 RESULTS

W	TROY	43-19
W	WOFFORD	35-27
W	AUBURN	38-24
W	FLORIDA STATE	35-30
W	at Virginia Tech	23-3
W	BOSTON COLLEGE	36-14
W	at Maryland	56-45
W	NORTH CAROLINA	59-38
L	at Georgia Tech	17-31
W	WAKE FOREST	31-28
L	at NC State	13-37
L	at South Carolina	13-34
	ACC Championship Game	
W	vs. Virginia Tech	38-10
	Orange Bowl	
L	vs. West Virginia	33-70

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.6	24
Rushing	158.5	59
Passing	282.3	21
Total	440.8	26

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.3	81
Rushing	176.9	83
Pass	217.5	50
Total	394.4	71

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-1	-0.07	66

RANKING

18 VIRGINIA TECH | HOKIES

ACC rank: 3 Record: 11-3 ACC record: 7-1 (1st, Coastal) Stadium: Lane Stadium (66,233)

Photo by Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images

"Logan is smart and competitive, so I think he keeps getting better."
— Coach Frank Beamer, on QB Logan Thomas

HOKIES at a GLANCE

COACH: Frank Beamer — At Virginia Tech: 209-98-2, 25 years; **OVERALL**: 251-121-4, 31 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryan Stinespring
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bud Foster

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1992
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 2 offense, 8 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Logan Thomas, RB Michael Holmes, WR Marcus Davis, WR/KR Dyrell Roberts, DE James Gayle, DT Luther Maddy, LB Bruce Taylor, CB Kyle Fuller

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Hokies came close to being a dominant defense last year, but injuries and an overall lack of depth kept them from reaching the elite level. Tech could take that next step this season. It returns most of its starting 11 and appears to have the depth needed to really excel this season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Tech graduated four of its starting offensive linemen and its No. 1 tight end, so building consistency up front was a priority in the spring. The Hokies have talent and athleticism up front, but they need this group to jell quickly to be successful.

OFFENSE

Junior quarterback Logan Thomas is on the cusp of stardom as he enters his second year as the starter.

Using his great size — cue the Cam Newton comparisons — the dual-threat Thomas finished last season with a school-record 3,482 total yards, tying the Tech record for rushing touchdowns in a season by a quarterback with 11.

His 234 completions, 391 attempts and 3,013 yards passing all rank second in school history for a single season, behind only Don Strock's records set in 1972.

Thomas focused on his footwork and accuracy in the offseason, and teammates said they noticed a calmer and more in-control Thomas during spring practice.

Even more responsibility will fall on Thomas this season, as the Hokies must replace David Wilson, who bolted early for the NFL after rushing for a school-record 1,709 yards.

The top two tailbacks in the spring were redshirt freshman Michael Holmes, who spent last year on the scout team, and true freshman J.C. Coleman, who enrolled in January.

The Hokies also must replace both starting wide receivers, four starting offensive linemen and a starting tight end.

Projected starting receivers Dyrell Roberts and Marcus Davis have played a lot of snaps. Tight ends Eric Martin and Randall Dunn have, too.

DEFENSE

Defensive starters gone from last year's team include All-American cornerback Jayron Hosley, who opted to leave school early for the NFL, and free safety Eddie Whitley.

Returning starters Kyle Fuller and Antone Exum will man the cornerback spots. Exum was moved from safety to corner during spring practice.

The front line will consist of defensive ends James Gayle and J.R. Collins, who combined for 13 sacks and 22 tackles for loss last season, and brothers Derrick and Antoine Hopkins at tackle. Sophomore Luther Maddy, an emerging star, could push for a starting spot inside.

The linebacker corps was banged up in the spring, but inside linebackers Bruce Taylor (foot) and Tariq Edwards (leg) and outside linebacker Jeron Gouveia-Winslow (foot) should be ready to go for fall practice.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior kicker Cody Journell could return, but his status was in question after spring ball because of legal troubles. Michael Branthover, Scott Demler and Ethan Keyserling competed for the starting kicker and punter jobs in the spring, but inconsistency is still a problem.

Coach Frank Beamer hinted that the starting kicker and punter could come from a group of incoming freshmen.

OVERVIEW

The Hokies have an experienced and skilled quarterback and a stacked defense, which are usually two good indicators of success in Blacksburg. The offense could certainly use some seasoning, but there seems to be enough talent on that side to provide Thomas with what he'll need to excel. By seasons' end, Tech should be in contention yet again for the ACC championship.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Michael Holmes: Holmes, a redshirt freshman, hopes to duplicate the career paths of former standout Tech tailbacks Darren Evans and Ryan Williams, both of whom spent a season on the scout team before thriving in the starting role a year later. Holmes (5-11, 208) has good vision and is improving as a blocker.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	**Logan Thomas***	6-6	262	Jr.
RB	20	Michael Holmes	5-11	208	Fr.
FB	45	Joey Phillips	5-11	233	Sr.
WR	11	Dyrell Roberts	6-2	188	Sr.
WR	7	Marcus Davis	6-4	228	Sr.
TE	86	Eric Martin	6-2	264	Sr.
LT	64	Nick Becton	6-6	328	Sr.
LG	76	David Wang	6-1	286	Jr.
C	74	**Andrew Miller***	6-4	300	Jr.
RG	67	Michael Via	6-7	283	Sr.
RT	71	Vinston Painter	6-6	304	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	99	**James Gayle***	6-4	260	Jr.
DT	98	**Derrick Hopkins***	6-0	305	Jr.
DT	92	**Luther Maddy***	6-1	288	So.
DE	42	**J.R. Collins***	6-2	252	Jr.
LB	43	Jeron Gouveia-Winslow	6-2	212	Sr.
LB	51	**Bruce Taylor***	6-2	253	Sr.
LB	24	**Tariq Edwards***	6-2	232	Jr.
CB	17	**Kyle Fuller***	6-0	181	Jr.
CB	1	**Antone Exum***	6-0	219	Jr.
SS	8	Detrick Bonner	6-0	186	So.
FS	34	Kyshoen Jarrett	5-10	188	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	38	Michael Branthover	5-8	187	So.
P	38	Michael Branthover	5-8	187	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 8	AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 15	at Pittsburgh
Sept. 22	BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 29	vs. Cincinnati (Landover, MD)
Oct. 6	at North Carolina
Oct. 13	DUKE
Oct. 20	at Clemson
Nov. 1	at Miami
Nov. 8	FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 17	at Boston College
Nov. 24	VIRGINIA

2011 RESULTS

W	APPALACHIAN STATE	66-13
W	at East Carolina	17-10
W	ARKANSAS STATE	26-7
W	at Marshall	30-10
L	CLEMSON	3-23
W	MIAMI	38-35
W	at Wake Forest	38-17
W	BOSTON COLLEGE	30-14
W	at Duke	14-10
W	at Georgia Tech	37-26
W	NORTH CAROLINA	24-21
W	at Virginia	38-0
	ACC Championship Game	
L	vs. Clemson	10-38
	Sugar Bowl	
L	vs. Michigan (OT)	20-23

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.9	57
Rushing	186.9	28
Passing	226.1	66
Total	413.0	35

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.6	7
Rushing	104.1	14
Pass	200.6	31
Total	304.6	10

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+5	+0.36	35

RANKING

28 NC STATE | WOLFPACK

ACC rank: 4 Record: 8-5 ACC record: 4-4 (4th, Atlantic) Stadium: Carter-Finley Stadium (57,583)

David Amerson

Photo by Mark Dolejs-US PRESSWIRE

"We're looking to break that 10-win barrier. We're going to reach for the stars." — Senior safety Earl Wolff

WOLFPACK at a GLANCE

COACH: Tom O'Brien — At NC State: 33-30, 5 years
OVERALL: 108-75, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dana Bible
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Archer

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1979
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Mike Glennon, RB Tony Creecy, WR Tobais Palmer, C Cam Wentz, DE Art Norman, CB David Amerson, S Earl Wolff, S Brandan Bishop

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The four veterans in the secondary have 114 career starts between them and helped the Wolfpack lead the country with 27 interceptions last season. Glennon joined Philip Rivers and Russell Wilson as the only quarterbacks in school history with 30 touchdowns and 3,000 yards in a season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: All three linebackers have to be replaced, and there's no pass-rushing specialist, which has been a strength in assistant coach Jon Tenuta's blitz-heavy schemes, among the newcomers. The running game, which features the same integral parts on the line and at running back, ranked 109th last season and was, at best, serviceable and, at worst, impotent.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Mike Glennon looks at a line with four veteran starters — and two backups with starting experience — and sees potential to build on last year's 8-5 record.

"We have a chance to be really good," Glennon said.

There were times when Glennon, a fifth-year senior, was really good in his first season as a starter. In the final three games of 2011, all wins, Glennon threw for 11 touchdowns with only two interceptions. He finished the season with 31 touchdowns and 3,054 yards and completed 62.5 percent (283 of 453) of his passes.

Most of Glennon's help from a year ago returns, including senior anchors Cam Wentz and R.J. Mattes on the line, and leading rusher James Washington (897 yards, seven touchdowns).

Sophomore running back Tony Creecy showed flashes of talent a year ago, running for 382 yards and catching 25 passes for 157 yards with three touchdowns. Creecy and receiver Tobais Palmer (37 catches, 496 yards) could see breakout seasons.

Receiver T.J. Graham (46 catches, 757 yards) will have to be replaced, as will all-conference tight end George Bryan.

DEFENSE

The Wolfpack will rely on a veteran secondary, led by junior cornerback David Amerson, an All-American who set an ACC record with 13 interceptions last season, and senior safety Earl Wolff.

There's no shortage of confidence or experience in the secondary, which helped the Pack lead the country with 27 interceptions. The four returning players have 114 career starts among them.

The loss of middle linebacker Audie Cole, the team's leading tackler (108), was expected. But one outside linebacker, Terrell Manning (76 tackles, 5.5 sacks), jumped early to the NFL, and the other, junior D.J. Green, was suspended for the season for testing positive for a banned supplement.

Senior Sterling Lucas, who missed last season with a knee injury, is the only experienced linebacker. Junior college transfer Robert Caldwell and converted safety Rodman Noel must get up to speed quickly.

The defensive line rotation will be a strength, with the return of veterans Brian Slay and Darryl Cato-Bishop, as well as up-and-comers Art Norman (tied for team-best with 5.5 sacks) and Thomas Teal.

SPECIAL TEAMS

NC State's kicking game is in good shape but has room for improvement. Kicker Niklas Sade was steady yet unspectacular last season, making 11 of 16 field-goal attempts. He was just 2 of 6 on kicks longer than 40 yards.

Graham, who had four career touchdown returns, graduated as the career leader in ACC history in total return yards. A combination of Palmer, Amerson and receiver Rashard Smith will attempt to fill Graham's considerable shoes.

OVERVIEW

The Wolfpack has the right mix of experience and talent, especially at quarterback and cornerback, to build on back-to-back winning seasons. But a breakthrough in the Atlantic Division, against Clemson and Florida State, isn't possible until the team becomes more consistent and can show it can win on the road.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Robert Caldwell: NC State needed to hit the recruiting trail hard for linebackers, and Caldwell, from the College of the Desert in California, is the best of the three who signed in February. Caldwell is physically prepared to play right away and likely will man the middle.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	8	**Mike Glennon***	6-6	232	Sr.
RB	24	**James Washington***	6-0	186	Sr.
RB	44	Logan Winkles	6-1	252	So.
WR	4	**Tobais Palmer***	5-11	175	Sr.
WR	80	Bryan Underwood	5-11	174	So.
TE	87	Mario Carter	6-4	262	Sr.
LT	79	**R.J. Mattes***	6-6	313	Sr.
LG	64	Andrew Wallace	6-5	265	Sr.
C	53	**Cam Wentz***	6-3	301	Sr.
RG	72	**Zach Allen***	6-3	328	Sr.
RT	78	Rob Crisp	6-7	312	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	92	**Darryl Cato-Bishop***	6-4	278	Jr.
DT	69	Thomas Teal	6-2	315	So.
DT	75	T.Y. McGill	6-1	290	So.
DE	55	**Brian Slay***	6-3	274	Sr.
LB	7	Sterling Lucas	6-2	231	Sr.
LB	N/A	Robert Caldwell	6-3	245	Jr.
LB	5	Rodman Noel	6-3	210	So.
CB	1	**David Amerson***	6-3	194	Jr.
CB	20	**C.J. Wilson***	5-11	187	Sr.
SS	27	**Earl Wolff***	6-0	207	Sr.
FS	30	**Brandon Bishop***	6-0	209	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	32	**Niklas Sade***	6-3	200	So.
P	36	**Wil Baumann***	6-4	185	So.

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	vs. Tennessee (Atlanta)
Sept. 8	at Connecticut
Sept. 15	SOUTH ALABAMA
Sept. 22	THE CITADEL
Sept. 29	at Miami
Oct. 6	FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 20	at Maryland
Oct. 27	at North Carolina
Nov. 3	VIRGINIA
Nov. 10	WAKE FOREST
Nov. 17	at Clemson
Nov. 24	BOSTON COLLEGE

2011 RESULTS

W	LIBERTY	43-21
L	at Wake Forest	27-34
W	SOUTH ALABAMA	35-13
L	at Cincinnati	14-44
L	GEORGIA TECH	35-45
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	38-24
W	at Virginia	28-14
L	at Florida State	0-34
W	NORTH CAROLINA	13-0
L	at Boston College	10-14
W	CLEMSON	37-13
W	MARYLAND	56-41
	Belk Bowl	
W	vs. Louisville	31-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.2	54
Rushing	104.9	109
Passing	240.0	54
Total	344.9	94
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.7	54
Rushing	131.2	37
Pass	223.7	61
Total	354.9	41
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+14	+1.08	6

RANKING

34 VIRGINIA | CAVALIERS

ACC rank: 5 Record: 8-5 ACC record: 5-3 (T-2nd, Coastal) Stadium: Scott Stadium (61,500)

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Michael Rocco

"We want to generate more points and if we're going to do that, it has to come from the passing game."
— Offensive coordinator Bill Lazor

CAVALIERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mike London — At Virginia: 12-13, 2 years
OVERALL: 36-18, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Lazor
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Reid

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1995
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 7 offense, 4 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Michael Rocco, RB Perry Jones, OT Oday Aboushi, OLB LaRoy Reynolds

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Virginia has a number of playmakers, starting with Jones, a do-it-all star who leads an experienced corps of running backs. Rocco is a classic, drop-back passer who has lots of potential. The offensive line is big, physical and experienced. Defensively, the linebacking corps is the heart of a unit depleted by graduation.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: With an inexperienced secondary, the Cavaliers could be on shaky ground if some of the younger players can't advance their game in a hurry. There's no proven pass rusher either, and that puts a lot of pressure on the defense. What's more, there are no proven kickers, another headache if that issue isn't settled early in training camp.

OFFENSE

After ending its longest bowl drought in nearly three decades last season, Virginia's aim is to make back-to-back postseason appearances for the first time since 2005.

The Cavaliers know they're going to have to score often due to a potentially shaky defense.

That's where junior quarterback Michael Rocco comes in. Rocco passed for 2,671 yards last season (fourth-highest single season figure in school history), and with experience under his belt, he realizes much of the pressure to score rests on his ample shoulder pads.

He will have plenty of playmakers to work with, including senior tailback Perry "Superman" Jones, who accounted for 1,458 yards rushing, receiving and passing last season. Jones has rushing help from veterans Kevin Parks and Cliff Richardson.

For the passing game to click, it is critical that Virginia's receivers perform at a higher level. While leading receiver Kris Burd is gone, a number of players have the necessary speed and experience to do the job, including deep threat Tim Smith. He averaged 17.1 yards on 33 receptions last season.

Darius Jennings and Dominique Terrell, converted high school quarterbacks, have shown play-making abilities, too. Jennings had 20 catches last season.

The Cavaliers boast an experienced and physical line featuring potential All-ACC tackles Oday Aboushi and Morgan Moses.

DEFENSE

Coordinator Jim Reid lost seven starters from a top 40 defense, including three-quarters of a veteran secondary.

Sophomore cornerback Demetrious Nicholson is the lone returning starter in the secondary, and while he has eventual all-conference potential, he's still only in his second season.

Sophomore strong safety Anthony Harris grabbed attention with uncommon maturity and performance in the spring. There's open competition at all the other spots.

The linebacking situation is well in hand with returning senior starters Steve Greer, a tough and smart middle backer, and versatile LaRoy Reynolds on the outside.

The other question mark is up front where the Cavaliers lost three starters from a unit that finished 90th nationally in sacks in 2011.

Three defensive ends made strides in the spring but it remains to be seen if the pass rush will improve without dipping into the incoming recruiting class — notably Eli Harold. There's little experience on the line, so the defensive front competition is fairly wide open.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Cavaliers lost their placekicker, punter and kick-off man. There's a bunch of newcomers vying for those positions, with the competition likely continuing until just before the opener.

Virginia likely will use more veterans and starters on special teams this season as opposed to last season, when the Cavs used many inexperienced players.

OVERVIEW

The Cavaliers could find themselves in many a track meet this fall with a potentially explosive offense needing to score lots of points in order to balance a shaky defense. Back-to-back strong recruiting classes could add depth and plug some key holes, but getting back to a bowl game may depend on just how many points the Wahoos can post.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Eli Harold: Ranked as the No. 1 prospect in the state of Virginia last season, Harold recorded 16 sacks as a senior at Ocean Lakes High School in Virginia Beach. Should be a strong addition to a defense that recorded only 20 total sacks last season. Has a reported time of 4.47 seconds over 40 yards.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**16**	**Michael Rocco***	**6-3**	**225**	**Jr.**
RB	**33**	**Perry Jones***	**5-8**	**185**	**Sr.**
FB	37	LoVante Battle	5-10	200	Sr.
WR	6	Darius Jennings	5-11	165	So.
WR	**20**	**Tim Smith***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**
TE	**89**	**Colter Phillips***	**6-6**	**245**	**Sr.**
LT	**72**	**Oday Aboushi***	**6-6**	**310**	**Sr.**
LG	79	Sean Cascarano	6-6	280	Jr.
C	71	Matt Mihalik	6-7	310	Sr.
RG	**70**	**Luke Bowanko***	**6-6**	**295**	**Jr.**
RT	**78**	**Morgan Moses***	**6-6**	**335**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**90**	**Jake Snyder***	**6-4**	**275**	**Jr.**
DT	98	Chris Brathwaite	6-1	270	So.
DT	93	Will Hill	6-4	280	Sr.
DE	47	Billy Schautz	6-4	250	Sr.
LB	30	Daquan Romero	6-1	230	So.
LB	**53**	**Steve Greer***	**6-2**	**225**	**Sr.**
LB	**9**	**LaRoy Reynolds***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
CB	**1**	**Demetrious Nicholson***	**5-11**	**165**	**So.**
CB	22	Drequan Hoskey	6-0	175	So.
SS	28	Anthony Harris	6-1	180	So.
FS	27	Rijo Walker	5-10	185	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	11	Drew Jarrett	6-0	185	Jr.
P	30	Alec Vozenilek	5-10	185	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	RICHMOND
Sept. 8	PENN STATE
Sept. 15	at Georgia Tech
Sept. 22	at TCU
Sept. 29	LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 6	at Duke
Oct. 13	MARYLAND
Oct. 20	WAKE FOREST
Nov. 3	at NC State
Nov. 10	MIAMI
Nov. 15	NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 24	at Virginia Tech

2011 RESULTS

W	WILLIAM & MARY	40-3
W	at Indiana	34-31
L	at North Carolina	17-28
L	SOUTHERN MISS	24-30
W	IDAHO (OT)	21-20
W	GEORGIA TECH	24-21
L	NC STATE	14-28
W	at Miami	28-21
W	at Maryland	31-13
W	DUKE	31-21
W	at Florida State	14-13
L	VIRGINIA TECH	0-38
	Chick-fil-A Bowl	
L	vs. Auburn	24-43

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.2	86
Rushing	162.1	52
Passing	237.7	56
Total	399.8	46
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.9	46
Rushing	139.5	48
Pass	212.2	45
Total	351.7	40
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.54	97

RANKING

35 GEORGIA TECH | YELLOW JACKETS

ACC rank: 6 Record: 8-5 ACC record: 5-3 (T-2nd, Coastal) Stadium: Bobby Dodd Stadium (55,000)

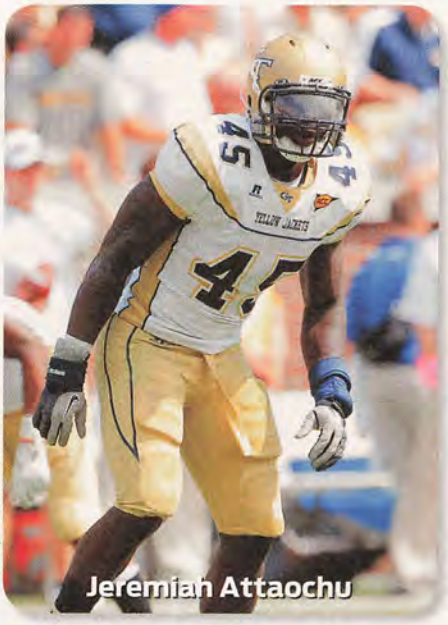


Photo by Todd Kirkland/Icon SMI

"We bring speed and we bring power at the same time."
— LB Jeremiah Attaochu, on Tech's linebackers

YELLOW JACKETS at a GLANCE

COACH: Paul Johnson — At Georgia Tech: 34-19, 4 years
OVERALL: 141-58, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Al Groh

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2009
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1996
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tevin Washington, FB David Sims, OG Omoregie Uzzi, LB Jeremiah Attaochu, LB Quayshawn Nealy, S Jemea Thomas, S Isaiah Johnson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Johnson will open up his triple-option offense in his fifth season, utilizing more formations and making tricky preparation even tougher for defenses. A talented, veteran offensive line gives the Jackets that flexibility. Georgia Tech's linebackers and secondary can wreak havoc in the 3-4 scheme.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Georgia Tech's offense lacked playmakers a year ago and still has potential issues at quarterback. The defensive line is unproven and could hamper an otherwise promising unit if the linemen can't control the line of scrimmage.

OFFENSE

The offense is primed to explode like it did in Tech's 2009 ACC title season, led by a seasoned group up front, veteran quarterback Tevin Washington and experienced running backs.

"There are a lot of guys who have gotten better," coach Paul Johnson said.

The middle of the line is a strength, with center Jay Finch partnering with guards Will Jackson and Omoregie Uzzi, a two-time All-ACC performer.

The tailback position, which is actually a fullback in the option offense, struggled in each of Georgia Tech's losses last season. Starter David Sims finished with roughly half the yards that predecessors Anthony Allen and Jonathan Dwyer averaged in Johnson's first three seasons.

But Sims will get an opportunity to make amends, and he looked much more comfortable in the spring. He was a newcomer to the spot a year ago, facing a steep learning curve in reading blocks and hitting creases after moving from quarterback.

The biggest challenge is a familiar one: Grow the passing game. Washington showed the ability to stretch the field with his arm strength last season, but wide receiver Stephen Hill left early for the NFL. The Yellow Jackets' other starting wide receiver, Tyler Melton, exhausted his eligibility.

Three promising receivers emerged in spring drills, but expect the halfbacks to play a bigger role in the passing game.

DEFENSE

Graduation losses on the line left the Yellow Jackets with more speed than brawn up front, so coordinator Al Groh is bending his 3-4 scheme to take advantage of that quickness.

Defensive ends Izaan Cross and Emmanuel Dieke will often be charged with applying pressure to the backfield. They will be doing the dirty work to set up linebackers to make the big stops.

Groh indoctrinated a young group of linebackers last fall, led by star Jeremiah Attaochu. Add 2011's top recruit, Jabari Hunt-Days, to the rotation, and the Yellow Jackets promise to be disruptive.

Georgia Tech should be much improved in the secondary, where all four starters played extensively a year ago. Louis Young has emerged as a lockdown cover corner, and safeties Isaiah Johnson and Jemea Thomas have a knack for big plays.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Nothing required more offseason attention than Georgia Tech's kicking game, and the focus was only marginally on the players who put foot to ball.

Last year's lowlights included two blocked field goals, one returned for a touchdown; a fumbled punt return that resulted in a touchdown; two punts that measured less than 20 yards; and three missed field-goal attempts in an overtime Sun Bowl loss to Utah.

OVERVIEW

Georgia Tech has the pieces: a veteran offensive line, a senior quarterback and a talent-laden defense. But can Johnson and Groh fit the puzzle together? Or more to the point, will a playmaker or two on both sides of the ball emerge and elevate the Yellow Jackets? That will be the difference between another ho-hum eight or nine-win season and a division championship.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Jabari Hunt-Days: The redshirt freshman was the top recruit in the 2011 class, and now he looks ready to emerge. He has bulked to 245 pounds, and his 6-3 frame will give Georgia Tech a fearsome rotation at outside linebacker with Jeremiah Attaochu and Brandon Watts.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**13**	**Tevin Washington***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
FB	**7**	**David Sims***	**6-0**	**218**	**Jr.**
HB	25	Robert Godhigh	5-7	187	Jr.
HB	**17**	**Orwin Smith***	**6-0**	**202**	**Sr.**
WR	83	Jeremy Moore	6-3	180	Jr.
WR	33	Chris Jackson	6-1	205	Sr.
LT	**64**	**Ray Beno***	**6-2**	**290**	**Jr.**
LG	**52**	**Will Jackson***	**6-3**	**285**	**Jr.**
C	**50**	**Jay Finch***	**6-3**	**283**	**Jr.**
RG	**77**	**Omoregie Uzzi***	**6-3**	**300**	**Sr.**
RT	69	Tyler Kidney	6-2	262	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	99	Euclid Cummings	6-4	270	Jr.
DT	90	T.J. Barnes	6-7	347	Sr.
DE	**94**	**Izaan Cross***	**6-4**	**292**	**Sr.**
LB	**45**	**Jeremiah Attaochu***	**6-3**	**235**	**Jr.**
LB	**54**	**Quayshawn Nealy***	**6-1**	**223**	**So.**
LB	30	Daniel Drummond	6-3	248	Jr.
LB	**11**	**Brandon Watts***	**6-2**	**234**	**Jr.**
CB	**8**	**Louis Young***	**6-1**	**201**	**Jr.**
CB	**6**	**Rod Sweeting Jr.***	**6-0**	**184**	**Sr.**
SS	14	Jemea Thomas	5-10	190	Jr.
FS	**1**	**Isaiah Johnson***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**86**	**Justin Moore***	**6-3**	**180**	**Jr.**
P	**82**	**Sean Poole***	**6-1**	**161**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 8	PRESBYTERIAN
Sept. 15	VIRGINIA
Sept. 22	MIAMI
Sept. 29	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 6	at Clemson
Oct. 20	BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 27	BYU
Nov. 3	at Maryland
Nov. 10	at North Carolina
Nov. 17	DUKE
Nov. 24	at Georgia

2011 RESULTS

W	WESTERN CAROLINA	63-21
W	at Middle Tennessee State	49-21
W	KANSAS	66-24
W	NORTH CAROLINA	35-28
W	at NC State	45-35
W	MARYLAND	21-16
L	at Virginia	21-24
L	at Miami	7-24
W	CLEMSON	31-17
L	VIRGINIA TECH	26-37
W	at Duke	38-31
L	GEORGIA	17-31
	Sun Bowl	
L	vs. Utah (OT)	27-30

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.3	21
Rushing	316.5	2
Passing	142.3	112
Total	458.8	18
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.1	60
Rushing	161.5	66
Pass	197.9	28
Total	359.3	44
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	44

RANKING

45 NORTH CAROLINA | TAR HEELS

ACC rank: 7 Record: 7-6 ACC record: 3-5 (T-4th, Coastal) Stadium: Kenan Stadium (60,000)

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

"You put the ball in his hands, and he can make some plays. He can do special things with it."
— Coach Larry Fedora, on RB Giovani Bernard

TAR HEELS at a GLANCE

COACH: Larry Fedora — At UNC: 1st year
OVERALL: 33-19, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Blake Anderson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Disch

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1980
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 7 offense, 4 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Bryn Renner, RB Giovani Bernard, WR Erik Highsmith, LT James Hurst, TE Eric Ebron, DT Sylvester Williams, DE Kareem Martin, LB Kevin Reddick

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense will build around a second-year starter at quarterback (Renner) and a 1,000-yard rusher (Bernard). Add a veteran offensive line and quite a few athletic and talented receivers, and this group should score some points and get better as it adjusts to a new, fast system.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Just learning the new schemes on both sides of the ball is going to be a challenge. The defense does not look bad on paper, but it must deliver on game day. Whether there is enough depth on the defensive line remains to be seen.

OFFENSE

North Carolina has some veteran players, which should aid in the transition to first-year coach Larry Fedora's new schemes on offense and defense.

Start with quarterback Bryn Renner. His pass efficiency rating of 159.4 led the ACC last season. His ratio of 26 touchdown passes to 13 interceptions was excellent for a first-year starter. He will be the leader of this offense.

Last year, running back Giovani Bernard became the first 1,000-yard rusher since 1997. He averaged 5.2 yards per carry and gained 1,253 yards overall. He scored 13 touchdowns. His presence will be magnified.

Erik Highsmith, a 6-3 wide receiver, will be a critical contributor. The senior has played all of his three previous years on campus and has always been a playmaker.

Having a veteran line is going to be an enormous help. Their jobs should be easier than in the recent past. The field will be spread and the tempo pushed as fast as possible.

This should make it harder for defenses to substitute. So if the Tar Heels are successful in playing fast and moving the ball, they will wear down opponents.

DEFENSE

There is a big scheme change for defense as well.

The 4-2-5 defense has a "Ram," position. This is a fifth defensive back who would have been a nickel back in UNC's previous 4-3 scheme, but is now on the field more.

The Bandit position is also new. This player can be down as a defensive end or up as a linebacker.

Former linebacker Dion Guy is one person getting a chance at Bandit. Junior Curtis Campbell is another player who will move to the Bandit position.

Perhaps the most important part of this new defense, however, is Fedora's avowed goal for the Tar Heels to always be attacking.

This means turning athletes such as Guy, defensive end Kareem Martin, linebacker Travis Hughes, cornerbacks Sam Smiley and Tim Scott loose.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Fedora says there will be plenty of big plays on the special teams.

First, he will get stability with the return of placekicker Casey Barth, who missed last season with an injury. The team missed Barth and his accuracy. He has made 80.6 percent of his field-goal attempts in his three years (50 of 62).

Punter Tommy Hibbard was outstanding last season. He kicked the ball high and helped punt coverage.

T.J. Thorpe led the ACC in kickoff returns a year ago. He averaged 26.7-yards per return with one touchdown. He also is listed as the main punt returner.

OVERVIEW

Fedora is going to push this team to dedicate itself to make every game week special for the seniors, who will not get to play in the postseason. The ban includes the ACC title game if UNC were to qualify. Amid all this, there is a coaching transition underway, which means some rough spots along the way. Human nature dictates it. Senior leadership will be crucial.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Romar Morris: The freshman is going to have a chance to make a name for himself. Given the pace coach Larry Fedora wants to run his spread offense, starter Giovani Bernard cannot play all the snaps. Morris ran a 10.54-second 100 meters in high school.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**2**	**Bryn Renner***	**6-3**	**215**	**Jr.**
RB	**26**	**Giovani Bernard***	**5-10**	**205**	**So.**
WR	**88**	**Erik Highsmith***	**6-3**	**190**	**Sr.**
WR	6	Sean Tapley	6-1	185	So.
WR	13	Todd Harrelson	6-2	195	Sr.
TE	85	Eric Ebron	6-4	230	So.
LT	**68**	**James Hurst***	**6-7**	**310**	**Jr.**
LG	**64**	**Jonathan Cooper***	**6-3**	**310**	**Sr.**
C	60	Russell Bodine	6-4	305	So.
RG	**76**	**Travis Bond***	**6-7**	**340**	**Sr.**
RT	**73**	**Brennan Williams***	**6-7**	**315**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	95	Kareem Martin	6-6	260	Jr.
DT	**92**	**Sylvester Williams***	**6-3**	**320**	**Sr.**
NT	97	Shawn Underwood	6-1	300	So.
DE	57	Dion Guy	6-4	235	Sr.
LB	9	Travis Hughes	6-2	225	So.
LB	**48**	**Kevin Reddick***	**6-3**	**240**	**Sr.**
DB	1	Gene Robinson	5-11	190	Sr.
CB	4	Jabari Price	6-0	190	Jr.
CB	**7**	**Tim Scott***	**5-11**	**180**	**So.**
SS	**10**	**Tre Boston***	**6-1**	**190**	**Jr.**
FS	11	Sam Smiley	5-11	175	Fr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	11	Casey Barth	5-11	185	Sr.
P	**37**	**Tommy Hibbard***	**5-10**	**185**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	ELON
Sept. 8	at Wake Forest
Sept. 15	at Louisville
Sept. 22	EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 29	IDAHO
Oct. 6	VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 13	at Miami
Oct. 20	at Duke
Oct. 27	NC STATE
Nov. 10	GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 15	at Virginia
Nov. 24	MARYLAND

2011 RESULTS

W	JAMES MADISON	42-10
W	RUTGERS	24-22
W	VIRGINIA	28-17
L	at Georgia Tech	28-35
W	at East Carolina	35-20
W	LOUISVILLE	14-7
L	MIAMI	24-30
L	at Clemson	38-59
W	WAKE FOREST	49-24
L	at NC State	0-13
L	at Virginia Tech	21-24
W	DUKE	37-21
	Independence Bowl	
L	vs. Missouri	24-41

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.0	56
Rushing	138.9	76
Passing	254.4	36
Total	393.2	53
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.9	56
Rushing	123.9	27
Pass	241.3	78
Total	365.2	49
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-2	-0.15	74

RANKING

49 MIAMI | HURRICANES

ACC rank: 8 Record: 6-6 ACC record: 3-5 (T-4th, Coastal) Stadium: Sun Life Stadium (74,916)

Stephen Morris

Photo by Robert Mayer-US PRESSWIRE

"I'm not an excuse guy so if they're not ready to play, I have to do a better job."
— Coach Al Golden

HURRICANES at a GLANCE

COACH: Al Golden — At Miami: 6-6, 1 year
OVERALL: 33-40, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jedd Fisch
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark D'Onofrio

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2003, Big East co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2010, Sun
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 4 offense, 5 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Stephen Morris, TB Mike James, TB Duke Johnson, LT Seantrel Henderson, DL Anthony Chickillo, LB Denzel Perryman, S Ray-Ray Armstrong, DB Brandon McGee

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A veteran secondary that intends to go out on a strong note. They need to greatly improve on the one interception produced all of last season. The offensive line can be a strength if Henderson performs like the highly rated recruit he was.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Hurricanes look like they'll have a hard time scoring. Morris was inconsistent even when healthy. Unless Johnson bursts onto the scene, the backs lack an explosive game breaker. The receivers are young and inexperienced. The tight ends are better than the past few years but drop too many passes, and the offensive line lost three starters.

OFFENSE

The final of the Hurricanes' final spring game was alarming: Orange 7, Green 6.

"It certainly wasn't spectacular from a fan standpoint or viewing standpoint," coach Al Golden said with a nervous chuckle and obvious understatement.

The Hurricanes are a mere shadow of their creative and prolific offenses of the 1980s, '90s and early 2000s.

The spring's offensive struggles were exacerbated by tailback Lamar Miller, receiver Tommy Streeter and offensive lineman Brandon Washington leaving early for the NFL. And the Hurricanes did not have starting quarterback Stephen Morris, wide receiver Allen Hurns, fullback Maurice Hagens and left guard Jon Feliciano for most, or all, of the workouts.

As a result, the scrimmages had many false starts, dropped balls, badly thrown passes and slow developing plays.

Miami needs a healthy Morris, immediate contribution from freshman tailback Duke Johnson and more production from its tight ends than it has received in the past few years. Golden said tight end Clive Walford is capable of 40 catches.

DEFENSE

It's hard to say how good the defense was in the spring when receivers dropped touchdown passes or quarterbacks missed wide open receivers.

Virginia Tech, Florida State and Notre Dame won't make those mistakes.

The feeling is the defense is getting more aggressive.

"I was pleased with the way the defense ran to the ball and was physical," Golden said. "I've been waiting for that for about a year-and-a-half."

In three spring games, Miami had seven interceptions, which is amazing considering it only had six last fall. Of those six, only one pick came from a cornerback.

That was a big reason why opposing quarterbacks completed 66.3 percent of their passes against the Hurricanes, who struggled to make third-down stops.

Sophomore linebacker Denzel Perryman shows big-play potential, and keeping defensive tackle Curtis Porter healthy is key to Miami's run defense.

With cornerback Brandon McGee and safeties Ray-Ray Armstrong and Vaughn Telemaque being seniors, Miami's secondary should be the team's biggest strength. All were highly rated out of high school but have found themselves demoted on the depth chart at various times for not making plays, poor tackling or having off-field issues.

SPECIAL TEAMS

A year ago, Golden had serious concerns about Miami's special teams, but Jake Wieclaw made a respectable 11 of 14 field-goal attempts and didn't miss inside the 39. Meanwhile, Dalton Botts averaged 42.7 yards on 48 punts to rank No. 2 in the ACC.

Both players return, but punt and kick returners need to be found.

OVERVIEW

Miami looks like it will be rebuilding again after key graduation losses and five early departures for the NFL Draft. The offense and defense lack playmakers and, now, experience. The few veterans must come of age. Stephen Morris needs to limit picks and throw for 2,500-3,000 yards while relying more on tight ends and backs, as the Canes try to get above .500 this season.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Duke Johnson: The incoming freshman scored 70 touchdowns in his high school career, 29 as a senior, while being named Mr. Florida. The 5-9, 180-pounder has great cutback ability, deceptive speed, works the sidelines well and has a knack for finding his way over the goal line.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**17**	**Stephen Morris***	**6-2**	**214**	**Jr.**
RB	3	Duke Johnson	5-10	175	Fr.
RB	5	Mike James	5-11	222	Sr.
WR	80	Rashawn Scott	6-2	200	So.
WR	4	Phillip Dorsett	5-10	186	So.
TE	**46**	**Clive Walford***	**6-4**	**250**	**So.**
LT	79	Malcolm Bunche	6-7	325	So.
LG	**70**	**Jon Feliciano***	**6-5**	**320**	**So.**
C	62	Shane McDermott	6-4	290	So.
RG	**65**	**Brandon Linder***	**6-6**	**310**	**Jr.**
RT	77	Seantrel Henderson	6-8	350	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**71**	**Anthony Chickillo***	**6-4**	**258**	**So.**
DT	**98**	**Darius Smith***	**6-2**	**360**	**Sr.**
DT	96	Curtis Porter	6-1	300	Jr.
DE	94	Kelvin Cain	6-3	238	Jr.
LB	59	James Gaines	6-3	230	Jr.
LB	**52**	**Denzel Perryman***	**6-0**	**225**	**So.**
LB	45	Ramon Buchanan	6-1	222	Sr.
CB	**21**	**Brandon McGee***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
CB	37	Ladarius Gunter	6-2	196	Jr.
SS	**7**	**Vaughn Telemaque***	**6-2**	**211**	**Sr.**
FS	26	Ray-Ray Armstrong	6-4	215	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**40**	**Jake Wieclaw***	**6-2**	**195**	**Sr.**
P	**13**	**Dalton Botts***	**6-3**	**207**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Boston College
Sept. 8	at Kansas State
Sept. 15	BETHUNE-COOKMAN
Sept. 22	at Georgia Tech
Sept. 29	NC STATE
Oct. 6	vs. Notre Dame (Chicago)
Oct. 13	NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 20	FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 1	VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 10	at Virginia
Nov. 17	SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 24	at Duke

2011 RESULTS

L	at Maryland	24-32
W	OHIO STATE	24-6
L	KANSAS STATE	24-28
W	BETHUNE-COOKMAN	45-14
L	at Virginia Tech	35-38
W	at North Carolina	30-24
W	GEORGIA TECH	24-7
L	VIRGINIA	21-28
W	DUKE	49-14
L	at Florida State	19-23
W	at South Florida	6-3
L	BOSTON COLLEGE	17-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.5	63
Rushing	145.7	71
Passing	232.1	62
Total	377.8	70
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.1	17
Rushing	161.9	68
Pass	198.0	29
Total	359.9	45
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-4	-0.33	85

RANKING

54 WAKE FOREST | DEMON DEACONS

ACC rank: 9 Record: 6-7 ACC record: 5-3 (T-2nd, Atlantic) Stadium: BB&T Field (31,500)

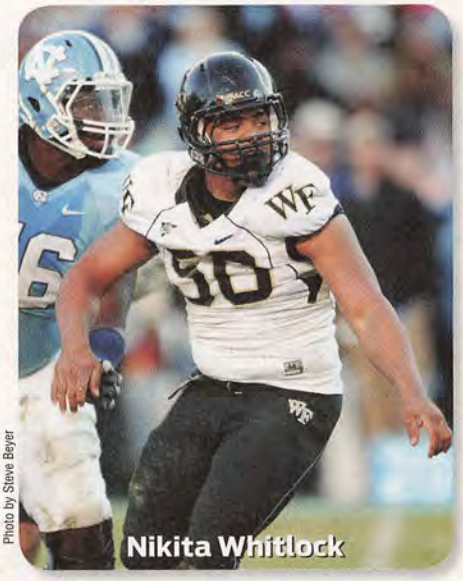


Photo by Steve Beyer

Nikita Whitlock

"Last year, we became too much fun-and-gun, and that was not good for us, especially late at the end of the year."
— Coach Jim Grobe

DEMON DEACONS at a GLANCE

COACH: Jim Grobe — At Wake Forest: 68-67, 11 years
OVERALL: 101-100-1, 17 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steed Lobotzke
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Brian Knorr

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 3 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tanner Price, RB Josh Harris, WR Michael Campanaro, C Garrick Williams, NT Nikita Whitlock, CB Merrill Noel, CB Kevin Johnson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Price is an experienced quarterback who leads the offense along with a potential dynamic rushing duo of speedsters — Harris and Orville Reynolds. The defense revolves around Whitlock, who can be unblockable, and a deep secondary, led by Noel.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line must replace four starters and build depth. With no experienced backup, Price must stay healthy. The Deacons need someone to step up and replace speedy wide receiver Chris Givens. The pass rush must improve after recording only 11 sacks last year.

OFFENSE

Maybe this will be the year Wake Forest will get back to running the ball more.

Certainly, that has been a team trademark under coach Jim Grobe. Speedy Orville Reynolds, who emerged as a true freshman late in the season, and the talented, but often injured, Josh Harris gives the Deacons a terrific 1-2 punch.

Harris, a junior who has averaged 5.1 yards per carry with 10 touchdowns in the last two years, has been clocked at 4.3 in the 40-yard dash but has been hampered by hamstring injuries.

A major concern is the offensive line, where senior Garrick Williams is the only returning starter. Sophomores Colin Summers and Antonio Ford are considered to be the best of an inexperienced group.

The Deacons have a proven leader at quarterback in junior lefty Tanner Price, who threw for 3,017 yards and 20 touchdowns last year.

Junior Michael Campanaro, who had 73 receptions last year, heads a group of receivers that includes Terence Davis, who had five touchdown catches. Junior Spencer Bishop is unproven at tight end.

Senior fullback Tommy Bohanon is a capable blocker and can catch passes out of the backfield.

DEFENSE

A young Wake Forest defense made some strides in 2011 after the previous year's unit allowed more than 35 points a game, last in the ACC.

Grobe hopes another year of seasoning — along with standout nose guard Nikita Whitlock and shutdown corner Merrill Noel — will continue an upward trend for the 3-4 defense.

"It all starts up front with Nikita," Grobe said of the junior dynamo. "Our top 11 has a chance to be pretty good."

Junior Zach Thompson returns at one of the defensive end spots and has shown "All-ACC ability" at times. He will be paired with Kris Redding, another junior with potential.

The Deacons will have a couple of speedy outside linebackers in Justin Jackson, who moves from the inside, and Joey Ehrmann, a returning starter.

Junior Mike Olson, a hard-hitter who is always around the ball, and savvy senior Riley Haynes man the two inside linebacker spots.

Noel, a redshirt sophomore who broke up a school-record 19 passes in his first year as a starter, heads a secondary that includes Kevin Johnson and junior safeties Duran Lowe and Daniel Mack.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Jimmy Newman finished third in the ACC in field goals per game, making 17 of 22 field-goal attempts for a .773 percentage, including a streak of 14 in a row. Consistent junior Alex Wulfeck is the returning starter at punter and has been put on scholarship. Sophomore Logan Feimster is back as the long snapper.

OVERVIEW

It's what's up front that will count most for Wake Forest. Senior center Garrick Williams will be joined by four new starters. Some early wins could help a young offense gain confidence as the Deacons, coming off a tie for second in the Atlantic Division last year, push for another bowl bid.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Sherman Ragland III: The Deacons need a deep threat to replace the talented Chris Givens, who left a year early to go to the NFL, and Ragland is considered to be a player who can stretch the field. The redshirt freshman ran indoor track for Wake and was a state sprint champion in high school.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**10**	**Tanner Price***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
RB	27	Orville Reynolds	5-8	175	So.
FB	42	Tommy Bohanon	6-2	245	Sr.
WR	81	Terence Davis	6-1	195	Sr.
WR	**3**	**Michael Campanaro***	**5-10**	**190**	**Jr.**
TE	89	Spencer Bishop	6-2	240	Jr.
LT	70	Dylan Heartsill	6-5	290	So.
LG	59	Antonio Ford	6-3	315	So.
C	**74**	**Garrick Williams***	**6-4**	**310**	**Sr.**
RG	76	Daniel Blitch	6-6	310	So.
RT	68	Colin Summers	6-5	320	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	54	Kris Redding	6-4	265	Jr.
NG	**50**	**Nikita Whitlock***	**5-11**	**260**	**Jr.**
DE	**98**	**Zach Thompson***	**6-5**	**255**	**Jr.**
LB	**39**	**Justin Jackson***	**6-1**	**220**	**Jr.**
LB	**41**	**Mike Olson***	**6-3**	**230**	**Jr.**
LB	**45**	**Riley Haynes***	**6-1**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	**40**	**Joey Ehrmann***	**6-4**	**220**	**Sr.**
CB	9	Kevin Johnson	5-11	160	So.
CB	**7**	**Merrill Noel***	**5-10**	**180**	**So.**
SS	34	Duran Lowe	5-11	210	Jr.
FS	23	Daniel Mack	6-0	200	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**82**	**Jimmy Newman***	**6-2**	**195**	**Sr.**
P	**24**	**Alex Wulfeck***	**5-9**	**175**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	LIBERTY
Sept. 8	NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 15	at Florida State
Sept. 22	ARMY
Sept. 29	DUKE
Oct. 6	at Maryland
Oct. 20	at Virginia
Oct. 25	CLEMSON
Nov. 3	BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 10	at NC State
Nov. 17	at Notre Dame
Nov. 24	VANDERBILT

2011 RESULTS

L	at Syracuse	29-36
W	NC STATE	34-27
W	GARDNER-WEBB	48-5
W	at Boston College	27-19
W	FLORIDA STATE	35-30
L	VIRGINIA TECH	17-38
W	at Duke	24-23
L	at North Carolina	24-49
L	NOTRE DAME	17-24
L	at Clemson	28-31
W	MARYLAND	31-10
L	VANDERBILT	7-41
	Music City Bowl	
L	vs. Mississippi State	17-23

2011 RANKINGS

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.0	68
Rushing	114.6	99
Passing	253.2	39
Total	367.8	78

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.4	65
Rushing	169.9	79
Pass	227.9	69
Total	397.8	74

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 9	+ 0.69	17

RANKING

69 DUKE | BLUE DEVILS

ACC rank: 10 Record: 3-9 ACC record: 1-7 (6th, Coastal) Stadium: Wallace Wade Stadium (33,941)

Photo by Chuck Liddy/Raleigh News & Observer/MCT

"We've been pretty good. Pretty good is not enough. We need playmakers to make great plays."
— Coach David Cutcliffe

BLUE DEVILS at a GLANCE

COACH: David Cutcliffe — At Duke: 15-33, 4 years
OVERALL: 59-62, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kurt Roper
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Knowles

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1989, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 1994, Hall of Fame Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 8 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Sean Renfree, WR Conner Vernon, RB Juwan Thompson, LB David Helton, CB Ross Cockrell

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With four starters back and a group of solid reserves, Duke has an experienced offensive line. It's the result of effective recruiting and Cutcliffe's desire to consistently redshirt incoming offensive linemen. Renfree is in his third year as a starter; Vernon is an All-ACC wide receiver.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Duke's defensive line is young and improving, but there are doubts it will be strong enough to consistently stop the run or pressure quarterbacks. That means Duke must use blitzes to try to force the issue. Duke turns the punting and kicking duties over to a pair of freshmen.

OFFENSE

Despite having experienced players at the skill positions, Duke struggled to mount a consistent attack last season and was 10th in the ACC in total offense.

So coach David Cutcliffe decided to shake things up.

Having already started 23 games in his career, Sean Renfree is the starting quarterback. But he'll sometimes be joined on the field by one or maybe two other quarterbacks.

Duke has some formations with sophomore quarterback Brandon Connette lined up at tight end with another sophomore quarterback, Anthony Boone, at slot receiver.

One thing that won't change is the role wide receiver Conner Vernon, a second-team All-ACC selection last season, plays in Duke's offense. The Blue Devils are also encouraged with sophomores Blair Holliday and Jamison Crowder.

A solid line should set things up for Cutcliffe's new schemes. Four players who started nine or more games return up front. Big things are expected from sophomore guard Laken Tomlinson, a Freshman All-American.

DEFENSE

The Blue Devils' chronic issues with getting pressure on the quarterback and forcing turnovers have yet to be fixed. Duke was 11th in the ACC in total defense last season.

The 4-2-5 alignment installed last year relies on athletic players in the secondary. Duke has experience there with senior safeties Walt Canty and Jordon Byas, starters last season, and junior August Campbell.

The Blue Devils also have proven veterans at cornerback in Ross Cockrell and Lee Butler, who is recovering well from a knee injury that cut short his 2011 season.

Duke will miss linebacker Kelby Brown if the junior isn't able to play after suffering the second ACL tear of his Duke career in February. Promising sophomore David Helton will need to contribute there.

Duke has more athletes and better depth on the defensive line, but has yet to get the production it needs. Three returning starters should help — defensive ends Jordan Dewalt-Ondijo and Justin Foxx, plus junior nose guard Sydney Sarmiento.

There's hope Kenny Anunike, who had four sacks in three games before a knee injury ended his 2011 season, can be a solid pass rusher.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Redshirt freshman Will Monday is set to be Duke's punter. He also handled placekicking in the spring, but true freshman Ross Martin is expected to win the job in the fall. Cutcliffe is impressed with Martin's strong, accurate leg.

Josh Snead averaged 22 yards per kick return as a freshman in 2010, so his return from injury helps Duke there. Sophomore Jamison Crowder averaged 21.4 yards on kick returns last year in Snead's place.

OVERVIEW

After taking positive steps with nine wins in his first two seasons at Duke, Cutcliffe has experienced a pair of 3-9 seasons over the past two. To get out of the new rut, the Blue Devils need improvement on defense and more consistency on offense. Even so, this year's schedule isn't set up to allow Duke to challenge for a bowl game. More patience will be required.

TOP NEWCOMER

K Ross Martin: Duke will need Martin to arrive this summer and win the kicking job. Martin's range and accuracy earned him the top ranking by Rivals.com among senior kickers.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	19	Sean Renfree*	6-5	230	Sr.
RB	23	Juwan Thompson*	5-11	230	Jr.
WR	2	Conner Vernon*	6-1	195	Sr.
WR	8	Blair Holliday*	6-3	195	So.
WR	3	Jamison Crowder	5-9	175	So.
TE	89	Braxton Deaver	6-5	230	So.
LT	73	Takoby Cofield	6-4	310	So.
LG	74	Dave Harding*	6-4	290	So.
C	68	Brian Moore	6-2	285	Sr.
RG	77	Laken Tomlinson*	6-3	315	So.
RT	72	Perry Simmons*	6-5	305	Jr.

DEFENSE

DE	94	Jordan Dewalt-Ondijo*	6-4	230	So.
NG	91	Jamal Bruce	6-1	280	So.
DT	82	Sydney Sarmiento*	6-4	300	Jr.
DE	92	Justin Foxx*	6-3	245	Jr.
LB	47	David Helton	6-4	225	So.
LB	45	Austin Gamble*	6-1	240	Sr.
CB	6	Ross Cockrell*	6-0	180	Jr.
CB	20	Lee Butler*	5-11	185	Sr.
S	5	Brandon Braxton	6-1	200	Jr.
SS	32	August Campbell*	6-3	225	Jr.
FS	4	Walt Canty*	6-1	220	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	23	Ross Martin	5-9	190	Fr.
P	41	Will Monday	6-4	200	Fr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	FIU
Sept. 8	at Stanford
Sept. 15	N.C. CENTRAL
Sept. 22	MEMPHIS
Sept. 29	at Wake Forest
Oct. 6	VIRGINIA
Oct. 13	at Virginia Tech
Oct. 20	NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 27	at Florida State
Nov. 3	CLEMSON
Nov. 17	at Georgia Tech
Nov. 24	MIAMI

2011 RESULTS

L	RICHMOND	21-23
L	STANFORD	14-44
W	at Boston College	20-19
W	TULANE	48-27
W	at FIU	31-27
L	FLORIDA STATE	16-41
L	WAKE FOREST	23-24
L	VIRGINIA TECH	10-14
L	at Miami	14-49
L	at Virginia	21-31
L	GEORGIA TECH	31-38
L	at North Carolina	21-37

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.5	93
Rushing	94.1	115
Passing	272.2	28
Total	366.3	79

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.2	90
Rushing	180.7	85
Pass	244.8	84
Total	425.4	92

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-9	-0.75	108

RANKING

71 BOSTON COLLEGE | EAGLES

ACC rank: 11 Record: 4-8 ACC record: 3-5 (5th, Atlantic) Stadium: Alumni Stadium (44,500)

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

"We've been adapting to the offense better than the other years I've been around. There have been less mental mistakes."
— TE Chris Pantale

EAGLES at a GLANCE

COACH: Frank Spaziani — At BC and overall: 20-19, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Martin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill McGovern

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004, Big East co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010, Kraft Fight Hunger
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 9 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Chase Rettig, RB Andre Williams, TE Chris Pantale, WR Colin Larmond, DT Kaleb Ramsey, LB Kevin Pierre-Louis, CB Albert Louis-Jean, SS Jim Noel

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Despite a lack of success in the win-loss column, the defense continues to be strong with Spaziani at the helm. Even without Luke Kuechly, the linebacking unit is one of the best in the conference.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The reviews for the offensive line were positive in the spring, but until the front five shows it on the field, they will continue to be a question mark. The team lacks explosive players on offense.

OFFENSE

Former Kent State coach Doug Martin was hired as coordinator with the task of trying to turn around BC's offense, which arguably has been the worst in the ACC over the past two seasons.

Quarterback Chase Rettig has the arm to be an All-ACC quarterback, but he has to improve on his decision-making and overall confidence to consistently make big plays. Rettig threw for 12 touchdowns and nine interceptions last year.

Rettig will work with one of the best tight ends in the ACC, Chris Pantale. With senior wide receiver Colin Larmond returning as well, Rettig can rely on two veteran weapons.

If Rettig is going to have success stretching the field, he's going to need a good running game behind him. But he won't have the school's career leading rusher, Montel Harris. He was trying to come back from a knee injury this spring, when he was dismissed from the team for violations of team rules.

The Eagles have capable backs in Andre Williams, Tahj Kimble and Rolandan Finch.

The area that needs to show the most improvement is the offensive line, where four starters return.

DEFENSE

Words can't describe how special Luke Kuechly was over his three-year career at the Heights. The middle linebacker, who became a first-round pick after his junior campaign, won the Butkus Award and led the nation with 191 tackles.

Junior Kevin Pierre-Louis will be asked to make up at least most of Kuechly's production. "KPL" has the size, speed and strength to be the next BC linebacker to reach the NFL.

Sophomore Sean Duggan got the first crack at taking over at middle linebacker for Kuechly, and he looks like a viable option if the staff wants to keep KPL on the outside. Steele Divitto returns on the strong side, so BC looks solid at linebacker even with the loss of Kuechly.

The Eagles look strong up the middle on the line, as well. Senior Kaleb Ramsey returns with Dillon Quinn and rising star Dominic Appiah.

The secondary has the potential to be good, but it is thin. That was evident in spring practice when the team needed to use a backup kicker and a fifth-string quarterback to take snaps at safety for the spring game.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Nate Freese has the potential to be a weapon for the Eagles, as he routinely converts field-goal attempts of 50 to 55 yards in practice. The Eagles must find a replacement for underrated punter Ryan Quigley, who attempted the second-most punts in the conference last season.

OVERVIEW

The Eagles have the pieces to get back to a bowl game. The defense should be stout at stopping the run, which might be good enough to succeed in the ACC with the lack of quality quarterbacks. If Chase Rettig takes the next step forward, the Eagles could win 8-9 games. Without that happening, it might be the end of Spaziani's run at the Heights.

TOP NEWCOMER

LT Win Homer: The true freshman from Virginia was the top-ranked player in Boston College's recruiting class, turning down several other ACC offers. He will need to get in the weight room and fill out, so it's expected he will need to a year before competing for playing time.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	Chase Rettig*	6-3	212	Jr.
RB	44	Andre Williams*	6-0	222	Jr.
WR	1	Colin Larmond Jr.*	6-3	202	Sr.
WR	10	Bobby Swigert*	6-1	184	Jr.
WR	83	Alex Amidon	5-11	185	Jr.
TE	81	Chris Pantale*	6-6	251	Sr.
LT	77	Emmett Cleary*	6-7	303	Sr.
LG	76	Bobby Vardaro*	6-5	301	So.
C	62	Ian White*	6-5	298	Jr.
RG	64	Harris Williams	6-4	298	So.
RT	73	John Wetzel*	6-8	302	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	91	Kasim Edebali*	6-2	249	Jr.
DT	96	Kaleb Ramsey	6-3	302	Sr.
DT	92	Dillon Quinn*	6-6	292	Sr.
DE	99	Brian Mihalik	6-8	233	So.
LB	49	Steele Divitto*	6-3	225	Jr.
LB	24	Kevin Pierre-Louis*	6-1	212	Jr.
LB	34	Sean Duggan	6-4	215	So.
CB	5	Albert Louis-Jean	6-2	183	So.
CB	6	C.J. Jones	5-11	178	So.
SS	23	Jim Noel*	6-4	185	Sr.
FS	19	Sean Sylvia	6-0	196	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	85	Nate Freese*	6-0	181	Jr.
P	32	Gerald Levano	6-2	210	Sr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	MIAMI
Sept. 8	MAINE
Sept. 15	at Northwestern
Sept. 29	CLEMSON
Oct. 6	at Army
Oct. 13	at Florida State
Oct. 20	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 27	MARYLAND
Nov. 3	at Wake Forest
Nov. 10	NOTRE DAME
Nov. 17	VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 24	at NC State

2011 RESULTS

L	NORTHWESTERN	17-24
L	at UCF	3-30
L	DUKE	19-20
W	MASSACHUSETTS	45-17
L	WAKE FOREST	19-27
L	at Clemson	14-36
L	at Virginia Tech	14-30
W	at Maryland	28-17
L	FLORIDA STATE	7-38
W	NC STATE	14-10
L	at Notre Dame	14-16
W	at Miami	24-17

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.2	112
Rushing	130.9	82
Passing	167.8	100
Total	298.8	112
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.5	43
Rushing	151.1	59
Pass	243.3	81
Total	394.3	70
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.33	85

RANKING

76 MARYLAND | TERRAPINS

ACC rank: 12 Record: 2-10 ACC record: 1-7 (6th, Atlantic) Stadium: Byrd Stadium (54,000)

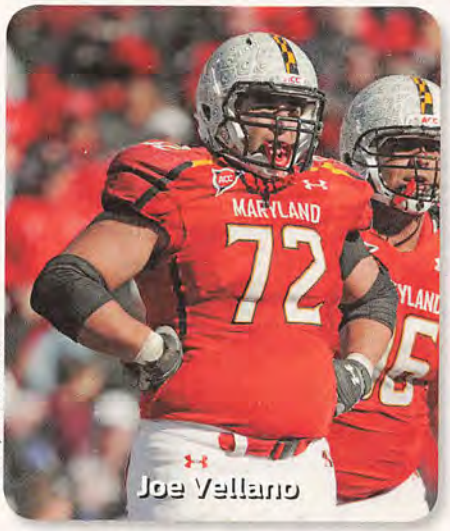


Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

"The people who are here now want to be here and embrace what we are doing."
— Coach Randy Edsall, who has had 25 players transfer from the program

TERRAPINS at a GLANCE

COACH: Randy Edsall — At Maryland: 2-10, 1 year
OVERALL: 76-80, 13 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Locksley
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Stewart

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001
LAST BOWL: 2010, Military
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB C.J. Brown, TE Matt Furstenburg, WR Stefon Diggs, DT Joe Vellano, LB Demetrius Hartsfield, LB Kenny Tate

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Maryland brings back nine of its top 11 tacklers, and that does not include Tate, a former first-team All-ACC selection who missed most of 2011 with an injury. Vellano anchors the defensive line. After waves of transfers out of the program, Edsall might now have a core to build around.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Terrapins must replace three starters along the offensive line, two of whom (tackles Max Garcia and R.J. Dill) transferred. A true freshman will be the backup quarterback. Depth is also a major problem in the secondary and along the offensive line.

OFFENSE

New coordinator Mike Locksley, a popular assistant at Maryland from 1997 through 2002, has installed a multiple no-huddle, pro-style offense with some spread-option principles that would take advantage of quarterback C.J. Brown.

Brown played in 10 games, with five starts, last season and displayed dynamic running ability, whether scrambling or on designed keepers. He was second on the team with 574 yards rushing, while averaging 7.3 yards per carry.

Brown needs to improve his throwing mechanics and work on standing in the pocket longer.

Sophomore Justus Pickett and redshirt freshman Brandon Ross waged a tight battle for the starting tailback position during spring camp. Pickett, who performed well as a kickoff returner and carried 74 times as a reserve in 2011, is quick and shifty. Ross has explosive speed and makes sharp cuts.

A trio of seniors — wide receiver Kevin Dorsey (45 catches, 573 yards), slot receiver Kerry Boykins (37-430) and tight end Matt Furstenburg (31-348) are the top returning targets.

Maryland lost three starting linemen. Right tackle Justin Gilbert joins left guard Bennett Fulper (22 career starts) as leaders of an extremely thin unit.

DEFENSE

Coordinator Brian Stewart is switching Maryland to a 3-4 defensive alignment in order to implement a more aggressive, attacking style. Stewart, a former defensive coordinator with the Dallas Cowboys, believes in constantly changing fronts and blitzing from all angles.

There is plenty of proven talent returning on defense, with 17 players who have started games for the Terps.

Senior Joe Vellano, a second-team All-American and first-team All-ACC selection, is the cornerstone. He switches from tackle to end in the 3-4 and figures to see more double teams.

Nose guard A.J. Francis is a space-eater with 23 career starts under his belt; he needs to have a big senior season.

Senior inside linebacker Demetrius Hartsfield was honorable mention All-ACC after finishing second in the league with 12 tackles per game. Senior Kenny Tate, who was a first-team All-ACC pick at safety as a sophomore, is coming back from a season-ending knee injury. Tate was playing well at outside linebacker a year ago before getting hurt.

Senior strong safety Eric Franklin was a revelation last season, finishing second on the squad with 106 tackles. Junior Dexter McDougle, who led the team with six pass breakups, is the only cornerback with game experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Nick Ferrara handled all three phases of the kicking game last season, but Edsall is hopeful redshirt freshman Nathan Renfro can take over punting duties. Ferrara, who missed spring drills with a hip injury, will be trying to regain the placekicking form he displayed in 2009 while earning Freshman All-American honors.

OVERVIEW

Five wins would amount to major improvement for Maryland, which remains young and inexperienced across the board. Edsall will need at least two more recruiting classes to restock the roster with quality talent.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Stefon Diggs: The consensus All-American picked Maryland over Auburn, Florida and Ohio State, among more than 40 scholarship offers. Diggs (6-0, 185) will get a chance to use his sprinter's speed and game-breaking ability as a punt and kickoff returner, while also cracking the depth chart at receiver.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	16	C.J. Brown	6-3	205	Jr.
RB	44	Justus Pickett	5-10	185	So.
FB	49	Tyler Cierski	6-0	255	So.
WR	**12**	**Kevin Dorsey***	**6-2**	**210**	**Sr.**
WR	**13**	**Kerry Boykins***	**5-11**	**190**	**Sr.**
TE	**89**	**Matt Furstenburg***	**6-4**	**245**	**Sr.**
LT	74	Nick Klemm	6-5	300	Jr.
LG	**63**	**Bennett Fulper***	**6-5**	**295**	**Sr.**
C	65	Sal Conaboy	6-4	285	So.
RG	68	Josh Cary	6-5	300	Jr.
RT	**75**	**Justin Gilbert***	**6-6**	**300**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**72**	**Joe Vellano***	**6-1**	**285**	**Sr.**
DT	96	A.J. Francis	6-5	305	Sr.
DE	**91**	**Keith Bowers***	**6-1**	**260**	**So.**
LB	6	Kenny Tate	6-4	220	Sr.
LB	53	Lorne Goree	6-2	235	So.
LB	**9**	**Demetrius Hartsfield***	**6-2**	**240**	**Sr.**
LB	**52**	**Darin Drakeford***	**6-0**	**235**	**Sr.**
CB	14	Jeremiah Johnson	6-0	185	So.
CB	**25**	**Dexter McDougle***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
SS	**48**	**Eric Franklin***	**6-2**	**215**	**Sr.**
FS	40	Matt Robinson	6-3	225	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**43**	**Nick Ferrara***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
P	18	Nathan Renfro	6-1	205	Fr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 8	at Temple
Sept. 15	CONNECTICUT
Sept. 22	at West Virginia
Oct. 6	WAKE FOREST
Oct. 13	at Virginia
Oct. 20	NC STATE
Oct. 27	at Boston College
Nov. 3	GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 10	at Clemson
Nov. 17	FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 24	at North Carolina

2011 RESULTS

W	MIAMI	32-24
L	WEST VIRGINIA	31-37
L	TEMPLE	7-38
W	TOWSON	28-3
L	at Georgia Tech	16-21
L	CLEMSON	45-56
L	at Florida State	16-41
L	BOSTON COLLEGE	17-28
L	VIRGINIA	13-31
L	at Notre Dame	21-45
L	at Wake Forest	10-31
L	at NC State	41-56

2011 RANKINGS

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.1	87
Rushing	169.3	42
Passing	210.3	75
Total	379.7	67

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.3	102
Rushing	219.8	111
Pass	237.4	75
Total	457.2	108

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+4	+0.33	36

PICKING **THE PAC-12**

Free at last, Trojans ready to run to Rose Bowl ... or beyond

The U in USC this season might stand more accurately for Unchained. Or perhaps Unstoppable.

The Trojans are finally free from a two-year postseason ban that was the NCAA's penalty for Reggie Bush-related crimes.

USC appears none the worse for the two-year hiatus, perfectly positioned as it comes off the ban to contend not only for the Pac-12 title — where we predict they will face Oregon in the conference championship game — but national honors, as well.

USC's hopes for this season rose greatly thanks to quarterback Matt Barkley's surprising decision to return for his senior season. Barkley bypassed the chance to be a high first-round pick for an opportunity to lead USC to Pasadena, or beyond.

A day before Barkley decided to return, safety T.J. McDonald — also a possible first-rounder — announced he would come back for another season.

The two are leaders of a young USC team that might have been the best in the conference by the end of 2011, winning a thriller in Eugene to knock Oregon out of the national title race, and capping the season with a 50-0 throttling of rival UCLA (which was the official Pac-12 South champion with the Trojans banned from the postseason).

All that talent makes USC the unquestioned favorite in the Pac-12 South, where the only team that seems positioned to be a serious threat is Utah, which went 8-5 last season and brings back its best offensive player (running back John White IV) and defensive player (Star Lotulelei).

Also back for Utah is quarterback Jordan Wynn, who was lost for the season in the first half of the Utes' first Pac-12 game last season. Utah hosts USC on Oct. 4, a Thursday night game that looms as a de facto Pac-12 South title game.

The rest of the South consists of teams largely starting over with big-name coaches — UCLA (Jim Mora), Arizona (Rich Rodriguez) and Arizona State (Todd Graham). While they are hoping for quick turnarounds, all appear a year or two away from truly contending.

The Pac-12 North appears to again be the province of Oregon, which has won the past two conference titles, each time thanks largely to winning regular-

PAC-12 Picks

NORTH	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Oregon	Speed kills, and Ducks have it everywhere, led by electrifying RB De'Anthony Thomas.	This is still a lot to lose from a backfield: QB Darron Thomas, RB LaMichael James.	Oregon is at that reload-rather-than-rebuild stage and should be a national player again.
2. Stanford	Winning attitude remains; superb linebackers lead what could be an improved defense.	No way Andrew Luck won't be missed greatly, and O-line also took significant hits.	Hard to fathom Cardinal won't drop a little. But if a QB emerges, it might not be far.
3. Washington	QB Keith Price returns to lead a solid offense, and the defense can't be worse.	Offensive playmakers must emerge, and linebackers remain a real question.	Huskies should again get to a bowl, but they look a year away from really contending.
4. California	Defense could be among best in the league; WR Keenan Allen among best in nation.	Bears must shed label of underachievers; QB Zach Maynard remains work in progress.	Heat might only get hotter on Jeff Tedford as Bears appear again to be about a seven-win team.
5. Washington St.	Hiring of Mike Leach injected much-needed enthusiasm; QB Jeff Tuel is healthy again.	Lines on each side of the ball remain questionable. Depth everywhere still an issue.	Leach and Tuel might be enough to get Cougs to a bowl game for first time since 2003.
6. Oregon State	Lots of youth thrown into the fire last year should be ready for the tests this year.	Offensive line a huge question, and offensive playmakers need to emerge.	Beavers could be better and still fall behind the rest of a competitive division.
SOUTH			
1. USC	Happy days are here again. Young-but-veteran squad has been building toward this moment.	Scholarship reductions mean there are depth issues at several spots, including RB.	Return of Matt Barkley made Trojans instant Pac-12, national title, favorites.
2. Utah	QB Jordan Wynn is healthy; DT Star Lotulelei; RB John White among best in conference.	Passing game needs improvement; offensive line has some holes to fill.	Senior-laden team looms as the biggest threat to USC in the South.
3. UCLA	New coach Jim Mora is injecting life into what is a talented, if young, roster.	Who is the quarterback? Offensive line is a huge question; attitude must be reset.	The Bruins have talent to surprise, but it's hard to trust UCLA's quarterbacks.
4. Arizona	Rich Rodriguez knows how to get things done; QB Matt Scott is nice centerpiece.	Cats adjusting to new schemes on both sides; defense needs to find pass rushers.	Wildcats should have more direction, but growing pains are expected in first RichRod year.
5. Arizona State	New coach Todd Graham can build around good RBs, defensive back seven.	The quarterback spot remains unsettled; offensive line is inexperienced.	ASU could be better than this, but you can't expect much more than a .500 season.
6. Colorado	Give us long enough and we'll think of something.	Few proven players anywhere; star WR Paul Richardson suffered ACL tear in spring.	Buffs may be the only team in the conference for which a bowl would be a real surprise.

season showdowns with Stanford. The Cardinal is now beginning life without Andrew Luck, making the Ducks an even more prohibitive favorite to win the North.

Oregon has to replace quarterback Darron Thomas — whose decision to leave early for the NFL was, in its own way, as surprising as Barkley's to stay — as well as running back LaMichael James.

Oregon appears to have suitable replacements for Thomas, with Marcus Mariota and Bryan Bennett. And the Ducks have plenty of young talent elsewhere (such as sophomore running back De'Anthony Thomas), many of whom have received significant playing time thanks in part to Oregon's rapid pace and constant shuffling of personnel.

Stanford still has one of the best defenses in the conference and that punishing ground game. Washington and Cal each won seven games a year ago and are hoping to emerge as contenders. UW needs to fix a leaky defense, though, and Cal an erratic offense, before making that leap.

— Bob Condotta

Most Valuable Player

Matt Barkley QB, USC

Offensive Player of the Year

Robert Woods WR, USC

Defensive Player of the Year

Star Lotulelei DT, Utah

Newcomer of the Year

Marcus Mariota QB, Oregon

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Matt Barkley	USC
Strongest arm	Matt Barkley	USC
Best scrambler	Bryan Bennett	Oregon
Coolest in the clutch	Matt Barkley	USC
Toughest to bring down	Stepfan Taylor	Stanford
Best hands	Marquess Wilson	Washington State
Most dangerous deep threat	Robert Woods	USC
Best pass blocker	Cameron Fleming	Stanford
Best run blocker	Khaled Holmes	USC
Best cover corner	Jordan Poyer	Oregon State
Best pass rusher	Chase Thomas	Stanford
Special teams demon	De'Anthony Thomas	Oregon

Lindy's 2012 ALL-PAC-12 Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Matt Barkley	Sr.	USC
RB	John White IV	Sr.	Utah
RB	Stepfan Taylor	Sr.	Stanford
WR	Robert Woods	Jr.	USC
WR	Keenan Allen	Jr.	Cal
TE	Austin Seferian-Jenkins	So.	Washington
C	Khaled Holmes	Sr.	USC
OL	David Bakhtiari	Jr.	Colorado
OL	David Yankey	Jr.	Stanford
OL	Cameron Fleming	Jr.	Stanford
OL	John Fullington	Jr.	Washington State
AP	De'Anthony Thomas	So.	Oregon
PK	Andre Heidari	So.	USC

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Keith Price	Jr.	Washington
RB	Curtis McNeal	Sr.	USC
RB	Kenjon Barner	Sr.	Oregon
WR	Marquess Wilson	Jr.	Washington State
WR	Marqise Lee	So.	USC
TE	Zach Ertz	Sr.	Stanford
C	Kyle Quinn	Sr.	Arizona
OL	Marcus Martin	So.	USC
OL	Brian Schwenke	Sr.	Cal
OL	Carson York	Sr.	Oregon
OL	Xavier Su'a-Filo	So.	UCLA
AP	Jamal Miles	Sr.	Arizona State
PK	Coleman Petersen	Sr.	Stanford

OFFENSE - THIRD TEAM

QB	Jeff Tuel	Sr.	Washington State
RB	Jonathan Franklin	Sr.	UCLA
RB	Isi Sofele	Sr.	Cal
WR	Markus Wheaton	Sr.	Oregon State
WR	DeVonte Christopher	Sr.	Utah
TE	Joseph Fauria	Sr.	UCLA
C	Drew Schaefer	Sr.	Washington
OL	Aundrey Walker	So.	USC
OL	Brice Schwab	Sr.	Arizona State
OL	Michael Philipp	Jr.	Oregon State
OL	Matt Summers-Gavin	Sr.	Cal
AP	Kasen Williams	So.	Washington
PK	Jordan Williamson	Jr.	Stanford

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Dion Jordan	Sr.	Oregon
DL	Star Lotulelei	Sr.	Utah
DL	Wes Horton	Sr.	USC
DL	Ben Gardner	Sr.	Stanford
LB	Dion Bailey	So.	USC
LB	Chase Thomas	Sr.	Stanford
LB	Hayes Pullard	So.	USC
DB	John Boyett	Sr.	Oregon
DB	T.J. McDonald	Sr.	USC
DB	Jordan Poyer	Sr.	Oregon State
DB	Nickell Robey	Jr.	USC
P	Jackson Rice	Sr.	Oregon

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Travis Long	Sr.	Washington State
DL	Deandre Coleman	Jr.	Cal
DL	Devon Kennard	Sr.	USC
DL	Scott Crichton	So.	Oregon State
LB	Jon Major	Sr.	Colorado
LB	Michael Clay	Sr.	Oregon
LB	Shayne Skov	Sr.	Stanford
DB	Brian Blechen	Jr.	Utah
DB	Deone Bucannon	Jr.	Washington State
DB	Desmond Trufant	Sr.	Washington
DB	Terrance Mitchell	So.	Oregon
P	Jeff Locke	Sr.	UCLA

DEFENSE - THIRD TEAM

DL	Taylor Hart	Jr.	Oregon
DL	Datone Jones	Sr.	UCLA
DL	Dave Kruger	Sr.	Utah
DL	Josh Shirley	So.	Washington
LB	Eric Kendricks	So.	UCLA
LB	Brandon Magee	Sr.	Arizona State
LB	Trent Murphy	Sr.	Stanford
DB	Tevin McDonald	So.	UCLA
DB	Ryan Lacy	Sr.	Utah
DB	Tra'Mayne Bondurant	So.	Arizona
DB	Damante Horton	Jr.	Washington State
P	Kyle Dugandzic	Sr.	Arizona

THE **BIG** ONES

Sept. 1	
Washington State at BYU	Mike Leach kicks off WSU career against his alma mater.
Sept. 8	
Nebraska at UCLA	Jim Mora could take big early step in winning over faithful with a W.
Washington at LSU	Early test of whether UW is ready to be near the college elite.
Sept. 15	
Arizona State at Missouri	Devils won in overtime in Tempe last season.
USC at Stanford	Cardinal has won last-second thrillers in each of the past two years.
California at Ohio State	Bears get a chance to prove defense is worthy of national hype.
BYU at Utah	Cougars look for revenge for embarrassing loss to Utes in Provo last year.
Sept. 22	
Utah at Arizona State	Devils handled Utes easily last year in Salt Lake City.
California at USC	Troy has won eight straight against Bears, most by wide margins.
Sept. 27	
Stanford at Washington	Cardinal has outscored Washington 106-21 in the past two years.
Sept. 29	
Oregon vs. Washington State (Seattle, WA)	First Chip Kelly-Mike Leach matchup will be played in Seattle.
Oct. 4	
USC at Utah	Thursday night affair could decide Pac-12 South title.
Oct. 6	
Washington at Oregon	Ducks have won eight in a row in the series, all by 17 or more points.
Oct. 13	
USC at Washington	Steve Sarkisian 2-1 against his former team, 1-1 against pal Lane Kiffin.
Stanford at Notre Dame	Cardinal has won three in a row after having lost seven in a row.
Oct. 20	
Stanford at California	Will it still feel like The Big Game in October?
Nov. 2	
Washington at California	UW's pilfering of Cal assistants only ups ante in increasingly heated rivalry.
Nov. 3	
Oregon at USC	BCS title game berth could be on the line — visitor has won the last two.
Nov. 10	
Oregon at California	Ducks well remember the near-defeat in Berkeley in 2010.
Utah at Washington	UW's best game of 2011 might have been its 31-14 win in Utah.
Nov. 17	
USC at UCLA	Don't think Mora won't remind Bruins of 50-0 pasting of 2011.
Stanford at Oregon	Oregon only Pac-12 team to beat Stanford the last two seasons.
Nov. 23	
Arizona State at Arizona	Two new coaches get their introduction to Territorial Cup.
Washington at Washington State	Apple Cup gets a new feel, played on Friday after Thanksgiving.
Nov. 24	
Notre Dame at USC	Trojans have won nine of last 10, but ND won last meeting in LA in 2010.
Stanford at UCLA	No rivalry weekend: Weird way for both teams to end Pac-12 regular season.
Oregon at Oregon State	Ducks have won last four by an average of 19 points.
Nov. 30	
Pac-12 Championship Game	Will be played at site of the team with best conference record.

MARQISE LEE

Photo by Gary A. Vasquez-US PRESSWIRE

BOWL CONNECTIONS

PAC-12 Champion
BCS (national title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Rose)

Pac-12 #2	Alamo vs. Big 12 #3
Pac-12 #3	Holiday vs. Big 12 #5
Pac-12 #4	Sun Bowl vs. ACC #4
Pac-12 #5	Maaco Bowl Las Vegas vs. MWC #1
Pac-12 #6	Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl vs. Navy (if bowl eligible)
Pac-12 #7	New Mexico Bowl vs. MWC #4/5

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Matt Barkley	QB	USC	Sr.	Nitpicking: Height, accuracy could be minor concerns.
2. Star Lotulelei	DT	Utah	Sr.	Who doesn't love a tough, 325-pounder in the middle?
3. Robert Woods	WR	USC	Jr.	Sure-handed and makes plays — also a great returner.
4. Keenan Allen	WR	Cal	Jr.	Stands 6-3 and makes people miss after the catch.
5. T.J. McDonald	S	USC	Sr.	Maybe the best safety prospect in the country.
6. Khaled Holmes	C	USC	Sr.	Could be first center taken in 2013 draft.
7. Dion Jordan	DE	Oregon	Sr.	Size (6-7) and speed off the edge will entice NFL.
8. Marquess Wilson	WR	WSU	Jr.	Numbers will only go up now with Leach as coach.
9. Desmond Trufant	CB	UW	Sr.	Has been inconsistent, but NFL will like his measurables.
10. Deandre Coleman	DT	Cal	Jr.	Intriguing talent could rise quickly with a big year.

By Adam Gorney | Rivals.com

PAC-12 RECRUITING

1. STANFORD: Stanford did a phenomenal job across the board. Kyle Murphy and Andrus Peat are the obvious standouts on the offensive line, but don't forget about four-star Joshua Garnett, who was one spot away from five-star status, and four-star Brandon Fanaika, who almost flipped to Utah. Four-star running back Barry Sanders is a big plus. Aziz Shittu along with Noor Davis and Alex Carter lead an impressive defensive haul.

2. USC: USC was limited to 15 scholarships, and the Trojans didn't waste any of them. The entire class is solid from Zach Banner, Jordan Simmons and Nelson Agholor, to the outstanding junior college players they signed, to linebacker Jabari Ruffin and defensive backs Kevon Seymour and Devian Shelton. There was some disappointment that Murphy, Peat and others spurned USC, but this class is phenomenal, like most USC classes.

3. UCLA: Mora said he thought he knew what recruiting was about but really learned some valuable lessons from the outstanding group of assistant coaches he assembled. For the first time out, Mora did a phenomenal job. Ellis McCarthy is the key to this class, but flipping wide receiver Jordan Payton from Washington and Jeremy Castro from Oregon, getting Devin Fuller and keeping Aaron Porter were big.

4. OREGON: Oregon didn't have the fireworks like last recruiting cycle when it flipped De'Anthony Thomas and landed five-star Colt Lyerla late in the process, but this is a strong class for the Ducks. Arik Armstead leads the way, but there are plenty of other four-star recruits to like in wide receivers Dwayne Stanford and Bralon Addison, linebacker Brett Bafaro and defensive ends Alex Balducci and DeForest Buckner among others.

5. WASHINGTON: Washington fans should be excited about Shaq Thompson and getting four-star quarterbacks Cyler Miles and Jeff Lindquist, especially because Miles was seriously considering a flip to USC. Four-star Jaydon Mickens has outstanding speed, and the Huskies flipped four-star cornerback Brandon Beaver and four-star DE Pio Vatuvei from USC.

6. CAL: For all the talk about players leaving Cal's class after assistant coaches Tosh Lupoi and Eric Kiesau left for Washington, the Golden Bears still compiled a top 25 class. Bryce Treggs leads the group, but quarterback Zach Kline, athlete Cedric Dozier, wide receivers Kenny Lawler and Darius Powe, and offensive tackle Freddie Tagaloa are all outstanding players.

7. UTAH: Utah did a solid job across the board. In addition to keeping Cedrick Poutasi, the Utes landed junior college four-star prospects Kelvin York and Visesio Salt, four-star defensive back Justin Thomas, and signed Chase Hansen, one of the top players in the state. On signing day, the Utes got junior college lineman Carlos Lozano, defensive back Alphonso Marsh and linebacker Moana Ofahengaue.

8. COLORADO: Coach Jon Embree and his staff are trying to turn things around at Colorado, and this recruiting class has some pieces that could be part of that revival. Yuri Wright and Kenneth Crawley are great cornerbacks, defensive ends Kisima Jagne and Samson Kafovalu, defensive tackle Justin Solis and athlete Christian Powell are all talented players.

9. ARIZONA STATE: Arizona State loaded up with nine junior college prospects and four recruits from the same powerhouse program in Southern California. Graham had a tough job coming into this situation late but did an admirable job closing on some prospects. If D.J. Foster had left the state for either USC or Cal, this class would not be nearly as good.

10. OREGON STATE: From top to bottom, Oregon State's recruiting class is no-nonsense. Four-stars Isaac Seumalo and tight end Caleb Smith lead the group, but there is a lot of three-star depth with Tyler Hasty, offensive linemen Gavin Andrews, Grant Bays, Stanley Hasiak, Garrett Weinreich and others.

11. ARIZONA: Rich Rodriguez and his staff came to Tucson and didn't steal away any major prospects, but did a fine job stabilizing things. They kept Kyle Kelley and four-star Zach Hemmila, plus added a few other quality prospects. Athlete Bryan Harper and defensive end Dwight Melvin could be steals.

12. WASHINGTON STATE: Washington State finished on the bottom of the Pac-12 rankings, but this class is much stronger than recent groups. Gabriel Marks, linebacker Jeremiah Allison, wide receiver Alex Jackson, all-purpose back Robert Lewis, defensive end Kache Palacio and linebacker Khalil Pettway all had great senior seasons in Southern California.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Shaq Thompson	6-2/210	S	Sacramento (Calif.) Grant	Washington
2.	Zach Banner	6-9/310	OT	Lakewood (Wash.) Lakes	USC
3.	Nelson Agholor	6-2/180	WR	Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep	USC
4.	Kyle Murphy	6-7/275	OT	San Clemente (Calif.) High	Stanford
5.	Ellis McCarthy	6-5/311	DT	Monrovia (Calif.) High	UCLA
6.	Aziz Shittu	6-3/275	DE	Atwater (Calif.) Buhach	Stanford
7.	Jordan Simmons	6-5/333	OG	Encino (Calif.) Crespi	USC
8.	Andrus Peat	6-7/305	OT	Tempe (Ariz.) Corona Del Sol	Stanford
9.	Joshua Garnett	6-5/295	OG	Puyallup (Wash.) High	Stanford
10.	Cyler Miles	6-4/220	QB	Denver (Colo.) Mullen	Washington
11.	Devin Fuller	6-0/185	ATH	Old Tappan (N.J.) High	UCLA
12.	Jabari Ruffin	6-4/230	LB	Downey (Calif.) High	USC
13.	Zach Kline	6-2/210	QB	Danville (Calif.) San Ramon Valley	Cal
14.	Max Tuerk	6-6/294	OT	Santa Margarita (Calif.) High	USC
15.	Isaac Seumalo	6-3/280	OG	Corvallis (Ore.) High	Oregon State
16.	Leonard Williams	6-5/254	DE	Daytona Beach (Fla.) Mainland	USC
17.	Alex Carter	6-0/193	S	Ashburn (Va.) Briar Woods	Stanford
18.	Arik Armstead	6-8/280	DE	Elk Grove (Calif.) Pleasant Grove	Oregon
19.	Gerald Bowman	6-1/210	S	Woodland Hills (Calif.) Pierce C.C.	USC
20.	D.J. Foster	5-11/190	ATH	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro	Arizona State

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR: SHAQ THOMPSON

Shaq Thompson had been committed to Cal, but ended up signing with Washington. It was a huge pickup for coach Steve Sarkisian and his staff. The five-star safety is an outstanding talent on both sides of the ball and really showed off his playmaking skills at safety at the U.S. Army All-American Bowl. Thompson is a tough, hard-hitting, take-no-prisoners kind of defensive back who could play immediately.

TOP SLEEPER: GABRIEL MARKS

Rivals.com rated Los Angeles Venice wide receiver Gabriel Marks as a four-star so he isn't exactly an unknown, but Marks never got lots of Pac-12 attention and it was always confounding. The four-star signed with Washington State, and he could be an immediate star for the Cougars because his style fits in well with first-year coach Mike Leach.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER: ZACH BANNER

Zach Banner is not a finished product and he has lots of work to do to become an outstanding college player, but the five-star offensive tackle from Lakewood (Wash.) Lakes has all the tools to be special down the line. The 6-9, 310-pound prospect is the son of former NFL standout Lincoln Kennedy, has a fantastic work ethic and has improved immensely over the past few years. If that progression continues, then Banner could be dominant at USC.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP: KYLE MURPHY, ANDRUS PEAT AND AZIZ SHITTU

Stanford landed three five-star prospects on signing day in offensive linemen Kyle Murphy, Andrus Peat and defensive tackle Aziz Shittu. All three could have ended up at USC – and some believed Murphy and Peat were headed there – but Stanford landed them all and ended up with the top class in the Pac-12.

BIGGEST MISS: SHAQ THOMPSON

Thompson was the top-rated safety and fourth-best prospect in the 2012 class by Rivals.com and had committed twice to Cal throughout the recruiting process. His brother played for the Golden Bears, too, but Thompson realized he wanted to chart his own path and ended up elsewhere in the Pac-12.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF: USC

Stanford's staff did an incredible job, and UCLA, Washington and other staffs have reloaded, but USC is loaded with outstanding coaches and the Trojans basically land every prospect they want. Coach Lane Kiffin does a great job closing with top prospects and his assistants relentlessly work all year long to establish relationships with recruits across the country.

RANKING

2 USC | TROJANS

Pac-12 rank: 1 Record: 10-2 Pac-12 record: 7-2 (1st, South) Stadium: L.A. Coliseum (93,607)

Photo by Steve Beyer

"They have real pressure this season because there are real expectations."
— An opposing Pac-12 coach

TROJANS at a GLANCE

COACH: Lane Kiffin — At USC: 18-7, 2 years
OVERALL: 25-13, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kennedy Polamalu
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Monte Kiffin

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST BOWL: 2009, Emerald
RETURNING STARTERS: 19; 9 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Matt Barkley, RB Curtis McNeal, WR Robert Woods, WR Marqise Lee, C Khaled Holmes, DE Wes Horton, LB Dion Bailey, CB Nickell Robey, FS T.J. McDonald

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense should score on any opponent. Barkley is a Heisman front-runner, while Woods and Lee are the best receiving duo in the country. McDonald and Robey anchor an experienced defense expected to be as effective as the glamorous offense. Kicker Andre Heidari is a hidden weapon.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Depth is a real issue. The Trojans have only two tailbacks with college experience and just three overall. USC has only four true defensive tackles and a converted offensive lineman making up the unit. If the Trojans suffer injuries at these positions — or, of course, at quarterback — their run at the BCS title could be a short one.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Matt Barkley enjoyed a light spring as coach Lane Kiffin tried to protect his Heisman hopeful from injury. That left plenty of snaps for backups Max Wittek and Cody Kessler, but the backup competition was too close to call at the end of the spring.

Barkley threw for 3,528 yards and a Pac-12 record 39 touchdowns last season, but the offense might be even more explosive in 2012. That's because wide receiver Robert Woods is expected to be 100 percent after being hampered by an ankle injury last season. Woods underwent surgery after the season and sat out spring drills.

Expectations are also higher for electrifying wide receiver Marqise Lee in his second year.

The Barkley-Woods-Lee aerial attack will be the heart of the offense, and tailback Curtis McNeal will do his share, too. He must remain healthy; the only other tailbacks are little-used D.J. Morgan and never-used Javorious Allen.

The biggest question is how to replace left tackle Matt Kalil, the No. 4 pick in the NFL Draft. But sophomore Aundrey Walker quickly took over in spring practice and will be challenged only by a group of incoming freshmen, led by tackle Zach Banner.

DEFENSE

Although overshadowed by the offense, the Trojans' defense has little reason to feel like a second-class unit, especially with the entire back seven returning, led by All-American safety T.J. McDonald.

Cornerback Nickell Robey has been one of the most dynamic players of the Kiffin era, starting every game in his first two years while returning punts and kickoffs.

Perhaps the real strength is at linebacker, where three sophomores start. Dion Bailey proved to be the most consistent playmaker last season, using his speed as a converted safety.

When Lamar Dawson took over at middle linebacker late in the season, Kiffin said the defense's character changed. The other starter, Hayes Pullard, tied Bailey with a team-high 81 tackles last season. The duo became the first freshmen to lead the Trojans in tackles since 1954, when the school began keeping records.

Defensive line has some questions. Devon Kennard starts at end following a subpar junior season, and the defensive tackles are untested, despite high hopes for sophomore George Uko.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Andre Heidari enjoyed about as good a freshman season as possible, making 15 of 17 field-goal attempts and all 50 extra points.

Punter Kyle Negrete averaged 40.1 yards per kick and was adept at pinning teams inside the 20. Kiffin made noise in spring practice that freshman Kris Albarado could become a long-range punter, with Negrete as a short-range specialist.

OVERVIEW

Everyone it seems, including *Lindy's*, thinks the Trojans should be ranked in the national top two. They certainly have the star power to merit the ranking. But they must navigate the regular season with little depth at key spots. And they cannot get tripped up by a Pac-12 opponent they are expected to beat — a problem in past years when USC was highly ranked.

TOP NEWCOMER

LT Aundrey Walker: It only took a week of spring practice for the coaches to realize he could replace All-American Matt Kalil. Walker will be entrusted to protect QB Matt Barkley's blind side. "His athletic ability is scary," coach Lane Kiffin said.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**7**	**Matt Barkley***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
TB	**22**	**Curtis McNeal***	**5-7**	**190**	**Sr.**
FB	31	Soma Vainuku	6-0	250	Fr.
WR	**2**	**Robert Woods***	**6-1**	**190**	**Jr.**
WR	**9**	**Marqise Lee***	**6-0**	**190**	**So.**
TE	**86**	**Xavier Grimble***	**6-5**	**260**	**So.**
LT	70	Aundrey Walker	6-6	320	So.
LG	**66**	**Marcus Martin***	**6-3**	**325**	**So.**
C	**78**	**Khaled Holmes***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
RG	**59**	**John Martinez***	**6-2**	**300**	**Jr.**
RT	**77**	**Kevin Graf***	**6-6**	**295**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	42	Devon Kennard	6-3	260	Sr.
NT	58	J.R. Tavai	6-2	270	So.
DT	90	George Uko	6-3	285	So.
DE	**96**	**Wes Horton***	**6-5**	**260**	**Sr.**
LB	**18**	**Dion Bailey***	**6-0**	**215**	**So.**
LB	**55**	**Lamar Dawson***	**6-2**	**235**	**So.**
LB	**10**	**Hayes Pullard***	**6-1**	**230**	**So.**
CB	**21**	**Nickell Robey***	**5-8**	**165**	**Jr.**
CB	**14**	**Isiah Wiley***	**6-0**	**180**	**Sr.**
SS	**29**	**Jawanza Starling***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
FS	**7**	**T.J. McDonald***	**6-3**	**205**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**48**	**Andre Heidari***	**5-10**	**210**	**So.**
P	**35**	**Kyle Negrete***	**6-0**	**225**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	HAWAII
Sept. 8	vs. Syracuse (East Rutherford, NJ)
Sept. 15	at Stanford
Sept. 22	CALIFORNIA
Oct. 4	at Utah
Oct. 13	at Washington
Oct. 20	COLORADO
Oct. 27	at Arizona
Nov. 3	OREGON
Nov. 10	ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 17	at UCLA
Nov. 24	NOTRE DAME

2011 RESULTS

W	MINNESOTA	19-17
W	UTAH	23-14
W	SYRACUSE	38-17
L	at Arizona State	22-43
W	ARIZONA	48-41
W	at California	30-9
W	at Notre Dame	31-17
L	STANFORD (4OT)	48-56
W	at Colorado	42-17
W	WASHINGTON	40-17
W	at Oregon	38-35
W	UCLA	50-0

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.8	16
Rushing	162.6	51
Passing	294.2	15
Total	456.8	21
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.6	45
Rushing	111.4	18
Pass	263.3	102
Total	374.8	54
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-1	-0.08	67

RANKING

5 OREGON | DUCKS

Pac-12 rank: 2 Record: 12-2 Pac-12 record: 8-1 (1st, North) Stadium: Autzen Stadium (54,000)

OREGON

Photo by Jim Z. Rider-US PRESSWIRE

"Our first group is as stout and as good as I've been around."
— Coordinator Nick Aliotti, on his defense

DUCKS at a GLANCE

COACH: Chip Kelly — At Oregon and overall: 34-6, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Helfrich
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Aliotti

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 4 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Kenjon Barner, RB/WR De'Anthony Thomas, WR Josh Huff, DL Dion Jordan, LB Michael Clay, FS John Boyett

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense will be solid and deep, with rover the only question mark, and experienced players are there to fill the role. Barner should be a premier Pac-12 running back, Thomas is one of the nation's most exciting players. UO has plenty of athletes on offense to utilize and depth on the offensive line.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: A new quarterback, either Marcus Mariota or Bryan Bennett, will take the reins. Playmakers need to emerge to team with Huff at receiver, and Colt Lyerla needs to be consistent at tight end. Blocking is always a key with the spread-option offense.

OFFENSE

Chip Kelly's up-tempo read-option offense has averaged nearly 50 points and more than 500 yards per game in the past two seasons, but there are questions this time around.

Sophomore Bryan Bennett and redshirt freshman Marcus Mariota are battling to be quarterback, and young receivers and tight ends have to step into prime time.

The quarterback battle is center stage after Darron Thomas left early, and was undrafted. Bennett played some last season, but Mariota looked more polished in UO's spring game.

The Ducks can rely on running back Kenjon Barner and slash player De'Anthony Thomas.

Barner steps out of LaMichael James' shadow, entering the season with 1,856 yards and 20 rushing touchdowns. Barner also has 34 receptions for 335 yards and five touchdowns, and two returns for scores.

The electrifying Thomas, coming off a sensational freshman season, has added some bulk and is ready for whatever role Kelly carves out for him. Thomas rushed for 595 yards and seven touchdowns last season, with 46 receptions for 605 yards and nine scores. And he had two kickoff return scores.

DEFENSE

The defense should be very good, led by one of the best linebacking units in the country in Michael Clay, Kiko Alonso and Boseko Lokombo.

Oregon also has six returning defensive linemen, including Taylor Hart and Dion Jordan, and a loaded secondary with four-year starting free safety John Boyett and three returning cornerbacks.

Rover could be the only question, but Erick Dargan, Ifo Ekpre-Olomu, Avery Patterson and Brian Jackson have experience.

Boyett has averaged seven tackles per game and has nine career interceptions. Jordan, quick and rangy at 6-7, 240, had 13 tackles for loss and 7 1/2 sacks last season as a junior.

The Ducks want to build depth in order to play up to 25 players on defense. One of those is likely to be touted true freshman defensive lineman Arik Armstead (6-8, 300), who impressed in spring ball with his athleticism and mentality.

SPECIAL TEAMS

With lightning speed, the Ducks have excelled on coverages and returns; Thomas can light up a game in an instant.

The Ducks feature one of the country's best punters in Jackson Rice, who has averaged 42.7 yards per punt in his career, including 45.9 last season when he was a Ray Guy Award finalist.

Alejandro Maldonado and Rob Beard return as experienced kickers. They have combined to go 19 of 28 on field-goal attempts in their careers, with Maldonado known for missing a potential tying field goal in last season's 38-35 loss to USC.

OVERVIEW

Could a fourth consecutive league title and BCS berth happen? Quite possibly. The Rose Bowl champs have a soft non-league schedule, which should prepare the new quarterback for the Pac-12 season. Barner's health is a key; depth at running back is a concern. If Oregon gets the proper quarterback efficiency, Pac-12 supremacy could be on the line Nov. 3 at USC.

TOP NEWCOMER

DL Arik Armstead: The 6-8, 300-pound true freshman, a *Parade* All-American, enrolled early for spring ball and should contribute immediately. His mission before the season: "Getting my playbooks (down)," he said.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	2	Bryan Bennett	6-3	200	So.
RB	24	Kenjon Barner	5-11	195	Sr.
WR	6	De'Anthony Thomas	5-9	175	So.
WR	**1**	**Josh Huff***	**5-11**	**200**	**Jr.**
WR	10	Rahsaan Vaughn	6-2	195	Sr.
TE	15	Colt Lyerla	6-5	240	So.
LT	75	Jake Fisher	6-6	280	So.
LG	**77**	**Carson York***	**6-5**	**285**	**Sr.**
C	**55**	**Hroniss Grasu***	**6-3**	**285**	**So.**
RG	60	Ryan Clanton	6-5	295	Sr.
RT	**61**	**Nick Cody***	**6-5**	**310**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	91	Tony Washington	6-3	250	So.
DT	**92**	**Wade Kelilkipi***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
DT	**66**	**Taylor Hart***	**6-6**	**290**	**Jr.**
DE	**96**	**Dion Jordan***	**6-7**	**240**	**Sr.**
LB	25	Boseko Lokombo	6-3	225	Jr.
LB	47	Kiko Alonso	6-4	245	Sr.
LB	**46**	**Michael Clay***	**5-11**	**220**	**Sr.**
CB	**27**	**Terrance Mitchell***	**6-0**	**185**	**So.**
CB	**14**	**Ifo Ekpre-Olomu***	**5-10**	**190**	**So.**
SS	12	Brian Jackson	5-10	200	Jr.
FS	**20**	**John Boyett***	**5-10**	**200**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**41**	**Alejandro Maldonado***	**5-10**	**190**	**Jr.**
P	**49**	**Jackson Rice***	**6-3**	**225**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 8	FRESNO STATE
Sept. 15	TENNESSEE TECH
Sept. 22	ARIZONA
Sept. 29	vs. Washington State (Seattle)
Oct. 6	WASHINGTON
Oct. 18	at Arizona State
Oct. 27	COLORADO
Nov. 3	at USC
Nov. 10	at California
Nov. 17	STANFORD
Nov. 24	at Oregon State

2011 RESULTS

L	at LSU	27-40
W	NEVADA	69-20
W	MISSOURI STATE	56-7
W	at Arizona	56-31
W	CALIFORNIA	43-15
W	ARIZONA STATE	41-27
W	at Colorado	45-2
W	WASHINGTON STATE	43-28
W	at Washington	34-17
W	at Stanford	53-30
L	USC	35-38
W	OREGON STATE	49-21
	Pac-12 Championship Game	
W	UCLA	49-31
	Rose Bowl	
W	vs. Wisconsin	45-38

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	46.1	3
Rushing	299.2	5
Passing	223.6	68
Total	522.8	4
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.6	52
Rushing	142.8	54
Pass	247.3	88
Total	390.1	67
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 9	+ 0.64	22

RANKING

21 STANFORD | CARDINAL

Pac-12 rank: 3 Record: 11-2 Pac-12 record: 8-1 (T-1st, North) Stadium: Stanford (50,000)

Photo by Bob Stanton/Icon SMI

Chase Thomas

"Our front seven is as good as you'll find in our conference."
— Coach David Shaw

CARDINAL at a GLANCE

COACH: David Shaw — At Stanford and overall: 11-2, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pep Hamilton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Derek Mason

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2008
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: TB Stepfan Taylor, TE Zach Ertz, WR Ty Montgomery, OL David Yankey, OLB Chase Thomas, DE Ben Gardner, ILB Shayne Skov

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive front seven is tough, relentless and stocked with playmakers on both levels; it will be difficult for any offense to handle. Taylor is one of the Pac-12's best tailbacks. Three starters and several experienced backups return on the line, and the Cardinal has a stable of physical fullbacks and tight ends.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The quarterback position is unsettled (whether it's Brett Nottingham or Josh Nunes), the receivers are largely unproven and there are two massive holes to fill up front. In addition, Stanford must replace three starters in a secondary that wasn't an elite unit to begin with.

OFFENSE

Sophomore Brett Nottingham and junior Josh Nunes will compete for the starting quarterback spot. Nottingham has the stronger arm, Nunes the edge in experience. Look for a starter to be named midway through training camp.

Regardless of the outcome, Stanford will rely on its running game to take pressure off the unproven aerial attack. Durable tailback Stepfan Taylor rushed for 1,330 yards last year, but he'll be facing defenses stacked to stop the ground game.

In order for Stanford to take advantage of passing opportunities, the receivers must ramp up their production. Ty Montgomery showed flashes of big-play potential last season (24 catches) but must become more consistent. There is no established second option.

Stanford will again be solid at tight end with Zach Ertz, Levine Toilolo and Ryan Hewitt, who also plays fullback. The threesome combined for 86 catches last year.

Stanford is set at three offensive line positions with right tackle Cameron Fleming, center Sam Schwartzstein and David Yankey, who can play either spot on the left side.

DEFENSE

Stanford was No. 3 in the nation against the run last season and should be stout again.

The line returns two starters in immoveable nose tackle Terrence Stephens and relentless end Ben Gardner (second-team all-conference). There are several quality candidates on the other end, with Henry Anderson topping the list.

The linebacking unit could be one of the nation's best if Shayne Skov recovers fully from a severe knee injury suffered early last season. His progress was on schedule as Stanford closed spring practice. Chase Thomas is a dynamic pass rusher (8.5 sacks) from the outside spot and occupies multiple blockers, thereby freeing up rushing lanes elsewhere.

The secondary must replace three starters. Sophomore Wayne Lyons is one of the most talented cornerbacks to ever play for Stanford, but he missed most of the 2011 season with a foot injury and is essentially a rookie.

A handful of players will compete to replace Delano Howell and Michael Thomas at safety, with Jordan Richards and Devon Carrington possessing the most experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Drew Terrell emerged in 2011 as the best Stanford punt returner in years, averaging 12 yards per return and breaking off several game-changing plays. Montgomery is a proven kick returner (25.2-yard average), but his expanded role at receiver may affect how frequently he is used on special teams.

The kicking game should be watched carefully: How will sophomore Jordan Williamson perform after missing two critical field goals in the Fiesta Bowl? Daniel Zychlinski is the favorite to punt.

OVERVIEW

Stanford enters a new era in the wake of quarterback Andrew Luck's departure. Whether the drop-off is moderate or significant depends on how quickly his replacement is able to handle the position efficiently. There's more than enough talent for Stanford to be one of the top teams in the Pac-12, but the ceiling isn't nearly as high as in the past couple of years.

TOP NEWCOMER

S Ed Reynolds: Although much attention will be placed on the touted offensive line recruits and incoming tailback Barry Sanders Jr., the biggest impact could come from Reynolds. The super-sharp safety missed the 2011 season with a knee injury but will compete for a starting spot in a leaderless unit.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	7	Brett Nottingham	6-4	210	Jr.
RB	**33**	**Stepfan Taylor***	**5-11**	**208**	**Sr.**
FB	**85**	**Ryan Hewitt***	**6-4**	**238**	**Sr.**
WR	88	Ty Montgomery	6-2	205	So.
WR	4	Drew Terrell	5-11	180	Sr.
TE	86	Zach Ertz	6-6	249	Sr.
LT	**54**	**David Yankey***	**6-5**	**302**	**Jr.**
LG	65	Khalil Wilkes	6-3	287	Sr.
C	**64**	**Sam Schwartzstein***	**6-3**	**290**	**Sr.**
RG	76	Kevin Danser	6-6	288	Sr.
RT	**73**	**Cameron Fleming***	**6-6**	**308**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**49**	**Ben Gardner***	**6-4**	**274**	**Sr.**
DT	**99**	**Terrence Stephens***	**6-2**	**295**	**Sr.**
DE	91	Henry Anderson	6-6	273	Jr.
LB	**93**	**Trent Murphy***	**6-6**	**255**	**Sr.**
LB	**11**	**Shayne Skov***	**6-3**	**251**	**Sr.**
LB	**17**	**A.J. Tarpley***	**6-2**	**232**	**Jr.**
LB	**44**	**Chase Thomas***	**6-4**	**245**	**Sr.**
CB	2	Wayne Lyons	6-1	194	So.
CB	**6**	**Terrence Brown***	**6-1**	**178**	**Sr.**
S	5	Devon Carrington	6-1	200	Jr.
S	8	Jordan Richards	5-11	211	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**19**	**Jordan Williamson***	**5-11**	**170**	**Jr.**
P	36	Daniel Zychlinski	6-3	213	Sr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 8	DUKE
Sept. 15	USC
Sept. 27	at Washington
Oct. 6	ARIZONA
Oct. 13	at Notre Dame
Oct. 20	at California
Oct. 27	WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 3	at Colorado
Nov. 10	OREGON STATE
Nov. 17	at Oregon
Nov. 24	at UCLA

2011 RESULTS

W	SAN JOSE STATE	57-3
W	at Duke	44-14
W	at Arizona	37-10
W	UCLA	45-19
W	COLORADO	48-7
W	at Washington State	44-14
W	WASHINGTON	65-21
W	at USC (3OT)	56-48
W	at Oregon State	38-13
L	OREGON	30-53
W	CALIFORNIA	31-28
W	NOTRE DAME	28-14
	Fiesta Bowl	
L	vs. Oklahoma State (OT)	38-41

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	43.2	7
Rushing	210.6	18
Passing	278.7	22
Total	489.3	8
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.9	30
Rushing	84.4	3
Pass	253.2	95
Total	337.6	26
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.38	30

RANKING

26 UTAH | UTES

Pac-12 rank: 4 Record: 8-5 Pac-12 record: 4-5 (T-3rd, South) Stadium: Rice-Eccles Stadium (45,017)

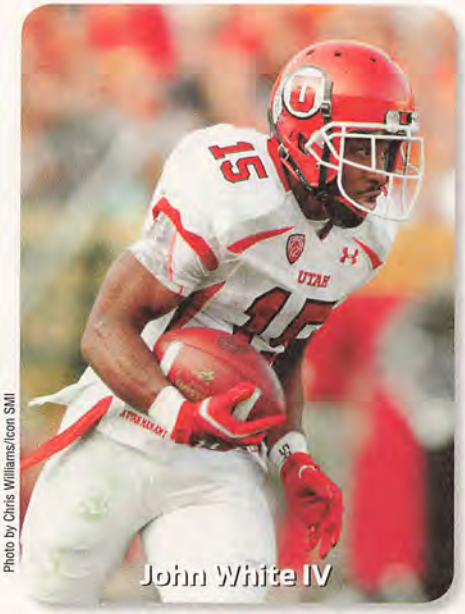


Photo by Chris Williams/Icon SMI

"We feel like there's less unknowns this year."

— Coach Kyle Whittingham

UTES at a GLANCE

COACH: Kyle Whittingham — At Utah and overall: 66-25, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Brian Johnson, Aaron Roderick (passing game)
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kalani Sitake

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2002
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jordan Wynn, RB John White IV, WR DeVonte Christopher, DE Nate Fakahafua, DT Star Lotulelei, DE Joe Kruger, SS Brian Blechen, FS Eric Rowe

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Utah returns major headliners on offense and defense. White is back for an encore after breaking a 29-year-old single-season rushing record with 1,519 yards. Lotulelei is the star of a defensive front that should be the best in the Pac-12. He won the prestigious Morris Award last season as the conference's top defensive lineman.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Replacing offensive tackles Tony Bergstrom and John Cullen could be an issue. The Utes have plenty of candidates, but four projected contenders — J.J. Dielman, Carlos Lozano, Jeremiah Poutasi and Marc Pouvave — weren't with the team this spring and will compete with others this fall.

OFFENSE

The Utes return ample experience, including junior quarterback Jordan Wynn, who missed the final nine games of 2011 with a shoulder injury. He fully participated in spring ball and has bulked up his 6-2 frame in an effort to become more durable.

The Utes have added depth at the position with the addition of true freshmen Travis Wilson and Chase Hansen. Senior Jon Hays is also back after making nine starts in 2011.

John White IV is new offensive coordinator Brian Johnson's top weapon. The junior college transfer was extremely durable last season, leading the Pac-12 with 316 carries. He averaged 116.8 yards per game.

Utah's receiving corps is also strong with seniors DeVonte Christopher, Luke Matthews and Reggie Dunn among a cast that includes rising sophomore star Dres Anderson. The Utes are also deep at tight end with four returnees.

The line boasts a returning interior but has sizeable holes to fill with the loss of starting all-conference tackles Tony Bergstrom and John Cullen, a tandem coach Kyle Whittingham considered the best in the Pac-12.

DEFENSE

Senior tackle Star Lotulelei, a *Lindy's* first-team All-American, headlines the entire defense and leads an experienced and talented front that includes the Kruger brothers — Dave and Joe — as well as Nate Fakahafua.

They're backed by talented reserves who will work into the rotation, allowing the Utes to avoid any fatigue in the trenches.

The secondary is skilled with former Freshman All-Americans Brian Blechen and Eric Rowe manning the starting safety spots. Seniors Ryan Lacy and Mo Lee are the top cornerbacks. They combined for 16 pass breakups and five interceptions last season.

At linebacker, the Utes must replace their top two tacklers (Chaz Walker and Matt Martinez) from 2011. Junior Trevor Reilly, the returning starter at Stud, is the veteran of a linebacking corps that includes six sophomores or freshmen that have tremendous upside.

Sophomore V.J. Fehoko and redshirt freshman Jared Norris are among the top contenders to start at middle and rover linebacker, respectively.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Coleman Petersen is the top returning kicker in the Pac-12. He made 18 field goals last season, connecting on 72 percent of his attempts. Veterans also round out the rest of Utah's kicking game. Punter Sean Sellwood and long snapper Patrick Greene have seen extensive action over the past three seasons.

Return specialists Christopher and Dunn are back to handle kickoffs, while Charles Henderson and Griff McNabb are expected to handle punt returns once again.

OVERVIEW

After righting the ship with a Sun Bowl victory over Georgia Tech, the Utes carry some momentum into their second season in the Pac-12. Increased depth overall and more stability at quarterback should make them more competitive this season. USC likely remains out of reach in the South, but the Utes should at least be knocking on the door of the Top 25.

TOP NEWCOMER

OL Jeremiah Poutasi: The highly recruited 6-5, 322-pounder out of Las Vegas chose Utah over offers from nearly every other school in the Pac-12 and from major programs all across the country. He was rated the nation's 10th-best guard by Rivals.com.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	Jordan Wynn	6-2	207	Jr.
RB	**15**	**John White IV***	**5-8**	**186**	**Sr.**
WR	**10**	**DeVonte Christopher***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
WR	6	Dres Anderson	6-1	175	So.
WR	**11**	**Luke Matthews***	**6-2**	**206**	**Sr.**
TE	81	Jake Murphy	6-4	255	So.
LT	79	Percy Taumoelau	6-4	315	Jr.
LG	76	Jeremiah Tofaeono	6-2	317	Jr.
C	**54**	**Tevita Stevens***	**6-3**	**302**	**Sr.**
RG	**74**	**Sam Brenner***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
RT	78	Daniel Nielson	6-6	317	Fr.
DEFENSE					
DE	96	Nate Fakahafua	6-3	240	So.
DT	**44**	**Dave Kruger***	**6-5**	**295**	**Sr.**
DT	**92**	**Star Lotulelei***	**6-4**	**325**	**Sr.**
DE	**99**	**Joe Kruger***	**6-7**	**275**	**Jr.**
LB	40	Jacoby Hale	6-0	225	So.
LB	7	V.J. Fehoko	5-11	223	So.
LB	**49**	**Trevor Reilly***	**6-5**	**240**	**Jr.**
CB	5	Mo Lee	6-1	195	Sr.
CB	**26**	**Ryan Lacy***	**5-9**	**190**	**Sr.**
SS	**4**	**Brian Blechen***	**6-2**	**215**	**Jr.**
FS	**18**	**Eric Rowe***	**6-1**	**200**	**So.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**95**	**Coleman Petersen***	**6-2**	**190**	**Sr.**
P	**86**	**Sean Sellwood***	**6-3**	**205**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	NORTHERN COLORADO
Sept. 7	at Utah State
Sept. 15	BYU
Sept. 22	at Arizona State
Oct. 4	USC
Oct. 13	at UCLA
Oct. 20	at Oregon State
Oct. 27	CALIFORNIA
Nov. 3	WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 10	at Washington
Nov. 17	ARIZONA
Nov. 23	at Colorado

2011 RESULTS

W	MONTANA STATE	27-10
L	at USC	14-23
W	at BYU	54-10
L	WASHINGTON	14-31
L	ARIZONA STATE	14-35
W	at Pittsburgh	26-14
L	at California	10-34
W	OREGON STATE	27-8
W	at Arizona	34-21
W	UCLA	31-6
W	at Washington State (OT)	30-27
L	COLORADO	14-17
	Sun Bowl	
W	vs. Georgia Tech (OT)	30-27

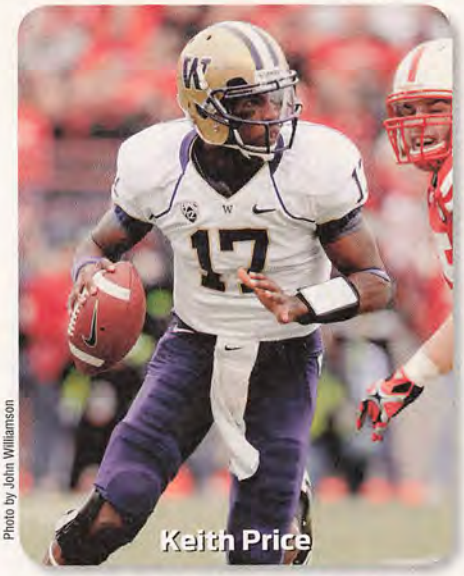
2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.0	74
Rushing	137.6	80
Passing	173.2	99
Total	310.9	109
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.2	19
Rushing	113.5	20
Pass	237.4	74
Total	350.9	38
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 10	+ 0.77	14

RANKING

32 WASHINGTON | HUSKIES

Pac-12 rank: 5 Record: 7-6 Pac-12 record: 5-4 Pac-10 (3rd, North) Stadium: Husky Stadium (72,500)



Keith Price

Photo by John Williamson

"There's a little bit, still, of a bad taste in their mouths from the bowl game, which is not a bad thing."
— Coach Steve Sarkisian

HUSKIES at a GLANCE

COACH: Steve Sarkisian — At Washington and overall: 19-19, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Kiesau
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Justin Wilcox

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 7 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Keith Price, WR Kasen Williams, TE Austin Seferian-Jenkins, DE Josh Shirley, CB Desmond Trufant, S Sean Parker

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Price is one of the best quarterbacks in the Pac-12, if not the nation. Williams and Seferian-Jenkins are elite young talents. The secondary has a lot of experience and should be vastly improved. The Huskies also appear to have improved speed on the perimeter of the defense.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: UW must replace some significant skill players on offense, notably TB Chris Polk. The offensive line was an issue throughout the spring and doesn't have much depth. The defense was among the worst in the nation a year ago, and changes in coaching and scheme might take a while to make a difference.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Keith Price was a revelation last season with his accuracy and ability to make plays running the ball as a first-year starter. He set a Husky record with a 66.9 completion percentage, despite playing most of the year with injuries to both knees.

Price's supporting cast won't be as strong without running back Chris Polk and receivers Jermaine Kearse and Devin Aguilar.

Wide receiver Kasen Williams and tight end Austin Seferian-Jenkins will take over the pass-catching production. Each had six touchdowns as true freshmen, with Williams making 36 catches and Seferian-Jenkins 41 after arriving as five-star recruits.

Jesse Callier and Bishop Sankey lead the committee to replace Polk. They are able to make plays outside the tackles; they will have to show if they can duplicate Polk's ability to get tough yards through the middle.

The biggest question is the line. Left tackle Senio Kelemete was lost to graduation, starting guard Colin Porter had to give up football (shoulder) and another starting guard, Colin Tanigawa, suffered a torn ACL late in the 2011 season. The one sure thing is senior center Drew Schaefer.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Justin Wilcox, hired from Tennessee, is experimenting with a variety of new 3-4 looks. That may be a better fit for the personnel and matchups against the Pac-12's spread offenses.

Coaches are optimistic about the front and the secondary, as the defense returns seven starters and nearly every key reserve.

Sophomore Danny Shelton will replace Alameda Ta'amu at tackle after emerging late last season. Sophomore end Josh Shirley may be in more of a stand-up role this year after recording 8.5 sacks.

Three starters return in the secondary, led by senior cornerback Desmond Trufant. Wilcox wants the Huskies to play more aggressively and take a few more chances in the defensive backfield.

The biggest concern, as it was last year, is at linebacker. One experiment that gained traction in the spring was using converted safety Nate Fellner outside, and moving John Timu, a starter last year on the outside, to the middle.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Most critical is replacing placekicker Erik Folk, a three-year starter. Junior college transfer Travis Coons is expected to fill his shoes. Despite being a true freshman, Korey Durkee is expected to take over the punting duties.

The Huskies could be without top kickoff returner Kevin Smith (knee) when the season opens. Callier and Sankey will be given every opportunity to become playmakers in this area, as well as in the backfield. Williams was the main punt returner last year.

OVERVIEW

Steve Sarkisian has brought the Huskies back to respectability, posting 7-6 records and bowl games in each of the past two years. The task for Sarkisian is to take the next step and compete stronger against Oregon and Stanford in the North. The offense should be good enough to hold its own against just about anyone; the question is how quickly the defense can catch up.

TOP NEWCOMERS

DB Shaquille Thompson: Thompson, regarded by many as the No. 1 safety prospect in the country last year, is the brother of former Cal standout Syd'Quan Thompson. He even committed to the Bears, but switched when UW hired three assistants with Cal ties. Shaquille can play anywhere in the secondary.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**17**	**Keith Price***	**6-1**	**195**	**So.**
RB	24	Jesse Callier	5-10	203	Jr.
WR	2	Kasen Williams	6-2	216	So.
WR	3	James Johnson	6-1	198	Sr.
WR	7	Cody Bruns	5-11	180	Sr.
TE	**88**	**Austin Seferian-Jenkins***	**6-6**	**258**	**So.**
LT	72	Micah Hatchie	6-5	299	So.
LG	**64**	**Colin Tanigawa***	**6-3**	**286**	**So.**
C	**73**	**Drew Schaefer***	**6-4**	**287**	**Sr.**
RG	**75**	**Erik Kohler***	**6-5**	**296**	**Jr.**
RT	59	Ben Riva	6-6	305	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	**22**	**Josh Shirley***	**6-3**	**235**	**So.**
NT	71	Danny Shelton	6-1	323	So.
DT	93	Andrew Hudson	6-3	240	So.
DE	52	Hau'oli Jamora	6-3	256	Jr.
LB	29	Nate Fellner	6-1	218	Sr.
LB	**10**	**John Timu***	**6-1**	**236**	**So.**
LB	**37**	**Princeton Fuimaono***	**6-1**	**215**	**Jr.**
CB	**6**	**Desmond Trufant***	**6-0**	**185**	**Sr.**
CB	18	Greg Ducre	5-10	180	Jr.
SS	**1**	**Sean Parker***	**5-10**	**200**	**Jr.**
FS	**20**	**Justin Glenn***	**5-11**	**209**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Travis Coons	6-2	205	Jr.
P	N/A	Korey Durkee	6-3	215	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 8	at LSU
Sept. 15	PORTLAND STATE
Sept. 27	STANFORD
Oct. 6	at Oregon
Oct. 13	USC
Oct. 20	at Arizona
Oct. 27	OREGON STATE
Nov. 2	at California
Nov. 10	UTAH
Nov. 17	at Colorado
Nov. 23	at Washington State

2011 RESULTS

W	EASTERN WASHINGTON	30-27
W	HAWAII	40-32
L	at Nebraska	38-51
W	CALIFORNIA	31-23
W	at Utah	31-14
W	COLORADO	52-24
L	at Stanford	21-65
W	ARIZONA	42-31
L	OREGON	17-34
L	at USC	17-40
L	at Oregon State	21-38
W	WASHINGTON STATE	38-21
	Alamo Bowl	
L	vs. Baylor	56-67

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.4	25
Rushing	154.3	63
Passing	255.5	35
Total	409.9	38
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.9	108
Rushing	168.7	76
Pass	284.6	116
Total	453.3	106
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

48 UCLA | BRUINS

Pac-12 rank: 6 Record: 6-8 Pac-12 record: 5-4 (2nd, South) Stadium: Rose Bowl (92,542)

Photo by Chris Williams/Icon SMI

Patrick Larimore

"We have to continue to be hungry."
— RB Johnathan Franklin

BRUINS at a GLANCE

COACH: Jim Mora — At UCLA and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Noel Mazzone
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Lou Spanos

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 8 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Johnathan Franklin, WR Joseph Fauria, OL Xavier Su'a-Filo, DE Datone Jones, DT Cassius Marsh, LB Eric Kendricks, CB Aaron Hester, CB Sheldon Price

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With tons of mature talent returning on defense, UCLA should — and needs — to play better, and smarter, defensive football. If the defensive line can get some push for the first time in two years, it will allow Hester and Price to thrive in coverage.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Mazzone wants to throw the ball around more, but does he have the offensive line — or the quarterback — to do so? A thin wide receiver unit is going to need to grow up quickly, too.

OFFENSE

UCLA enters the 2012 season — Jim L. Mora's first as head coach — faced with a classic quarterback quandary: Play for now or play for the future.

Now means seniors Richard Brehaut or Kevin Prince, neither of whom was a fit for the old Pistol offense. Future means redshirt freshman Brett Hundley, brimming with potential, but not there yet.

Accuracy is paramount in new coordinator Noel Mazzone's offense, as is a fast release and the ability to quickly get the ball to players in space, and UCLA does have players who can do something once they are in the open field.

Senior running back Johnathan Franklin almost hit the 1,000-yard mark for a second straight year, but now the Bruins replace departed senior Derrick Coleman with former Gatorade National Player of the Year Malcolm Jones.

The biggest target on the team, though, really is the biggest target on the team: 6-8 tight end Joseph Fauria, also known as the Y receiver. He will lead a largely untested unit into unfamiliar territory, as Mazzone intends to be much more passing-friendly than the old regime.

The line has struggled with pass protection in the past few years, but Xavier Su'a-Filo returned from his LDS mission to protect the quarterback's blind side.

DEFENSE

UCLA has plenty of talent on its front line — led by senior Datone Jones and junior Cassius Marsh — and the Bruins bring in even more with hulking freshman defensive tackle Ellis McCarthy. But talent has never been the problem. Production has.

A switch to a 3-4 defense under new coordinator Lou Spanos should open up the linebackers to become game changers, and no one will benefit more than sophomore Eric Kendricks. He and senior Patrick Larimore should be one of the best linebacker duos in the conference.

Any kind of pass rush — UCLA finished 112th nationally in sacks last season — will be a boon to a secondary long in talent and longer in the tooth.

Cornerbacks Aaron Hester and Sheldon Price return for their senior seasons, both ready for breakout campaigns. The real star could be sophomore safety Tevin McDonald, younger brother of USC standout safety T.J. McDonald.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Freshman placekicker Kaimi Fairbairn comes in with big hopes, but if he falters, UCLA's phenomenal punter Jeff Locke might be tagged to handle both duties. That would be a shame — Locke could lead the country in punting if healthy and able.

The return game is full of similar uncertainty. The Bruins are replacing both positions, with Jordon James and Ricky Marvray likely to get the first looks.

OVERVIEW

Mora embarks on his first campaign, calling for the Bruins to improve in three areas: Discipline, accountability and effort. Under Rick Neuheisel those were ignored, and it showed in the results. When UCLA was bad, it was awful. But when it was good, it was pretty good, and Mora inherits some talent that just needs a little better steering.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Ellis McCarthy: Five years ago, UCLA signed the top defensive player in California, and it paid major dividends. McCarthy could have a Brian Price-like impact, as well, and he'll get a chance to prove it early. If he lives up to the potential — and the size — he could be an early NFL selection, just like Price.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	17	Brett Hundley	6-4	225	Fr.
RB	**23**	**Johnathan Franklin***	**5-10**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	**1**	**Shaquelle Evans***	**6-1**	**205**	**Jr.**
WR	9	Jerry Johnson	6-4	218	Sr.
WR	15	Devin Lucien	6-1	192	Fr.
TE	**8**	**Joseph Fauria***	**6-7**	**258**	**Sr.**
LT	56	Xavier Su'a-Filo	6-4	310	So.
LG	**64**	**Greg Capella***	**6-4**	**310**	**Jr.**
C	54	Jake Brendel	6-5	295	Fr.
RG	71	Wade Yandall	6-4	315	Jr.
RT	**60**	**Jeff Baca***	**6-4**	**304**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**56**	**Datone Jones***	**6-5**	**280**	**Sr.**
NT	92	Brandon Willis	6-3	275	So.
DE	**99**	**Cassius Marsh***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
LB	**43**	**Damien Holmes***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
LB	30	Eric Kendricks	6-2	230	So.
LB	**42**	**Patrick Larimore***	**6-3**	**253**	**Sr.**
LB	**35**	**Jordan Zumwalt***	**6-4**	**235**	**Jr.**
CB	**21**	**Aaron Hester***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
CB	**22**	**Sheldon Price***	**6-2**	**185**	**Sr.**
SS	26	Andrew Abbott	5-11	200	Sr.
FS	**7**	**Tevin McDonald***	**6-0**	**202**	**So.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Kaimi Fairbairn	6-0	165	Fr.
P	**18**	**Jeff Locke***	**6-1**	**214**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Rice
Sept. 8	NEBRASKA
Sept. 15	HOUSTON
Sept. 22	OREGON STATE
Sept. 29	at Colorado
Oct. 6	at California
Oct. 13	UTAH
Oct. 27	at Arizona State
Nov. 3	ARIZONA
Nov. 10	at Washington State
Nov. 17	USC
Nov. 24	STANFORD

2011 RESULTS

L	at Houston	34-38
W	SAN JOSE STATE	27-17
L	TEXAS	20-49
W	at Oregon State	27-19
L	at Stanford	19-45
W	WASHINGTON STATE	28-25
L	at Arizona	12-48
W	CALIFORNIA	31-14
W	ARIZONA STATE	29-28
L	at Utah	6-31
W	COLORADO	45-6
L	at USC	0-50
	Pac-12 Championship Game	
L	at Oregon	31-49
	Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl	
L	vs. Illinois	14-20

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.1	88
Rushing	178.4	37
Passing	198.3	81
Total	376.6	72
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.4	92
Rushing	190.6	96
Pass	226.6	64
Total	417.1	89
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-5	-0.36	90

RANKING

50 CALIFORNIA | BEARS

Pac-12 rank: 7 Record: 7-6 Pac-12 record: 4-5 (4th-North) Stadium: Memorial (63,000)

Photo by Jason O. Watson-US PRESSWIRE

Keenan Allen

"He's a one-hand catching kind of guy. He can make any type of catch, especially those up-top balls, those jump balls."
— QB Zach Maynard on redshirt freshman WR Maurice Harris

BEARS at a GLANCE

COACH: Jeff Tedford — At Cal and overall: 79-48, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Michalczik
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clancy Pendergast

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 6 offense, 3 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Zach Maynard, RB Isi Sofele, WR Keenan Allen, DE Mustafa Jalil, NG Aaron Tipoti

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Bears boast great depth at running back, led by Sofele, but also feature smaller, quicker senior C.J. Anderson and redshirt freshman Brendan Bigelow, who performed well in the spring. Allen will be one of the best wideouts in the country and likely is playing his final season at Cal. Maynard is expected to play at a higher level this year.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line, replacing two departed starters, was a work in progress during spring ball. Aside from Allen, there is not a wideout with a track record, and the Bears are counting on at least two of five incoming freshmen to emerge in August. Cal is handing the punting chores to a true freshman.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Zach Maynard, who began his career at Buffalo, was erratic through midseason last year before finding a rhythm and improving his efficiency.

He threw 10 interceptions in Cal's first eight games, then just one over the final four regular-season outings, finishing the season with 2,990 yards and 17 touchdown passes.

While Maynard further solidified his hold on the position during spring ball, one of the keys to his improvement was the development of a more aggressive running game. Tailback Isi Sofele was a question mark when the 2011 season began, but he proved to be a durable every-down runner and wound up with 1,322 rushing yards.

Sofele returns with a deeper complement of tailbacks, including a slimmed-down C.J. Anderson and a healthy redshirt freshman Brendan Bigelow.

In junior Keenan Allen — Maynard's half-brother — the Bears have one of the nation's elite wideouts. Allen caught 98 passes for 1,343 yards and six touchdowns last season.

The question is the line, where the Bears are replacing two starters, including second-round NFL draft choice Mitchell Schwartz at left tackle. Senior Tyler Rigsbee is stepping into his spot.

DEFENSE

The Bears lose six senior starters, including Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year Mychal Kendricks at inside linebacker and two other players taken in the NFL Draft. Still, there are signs the defensive line could be one of the club's strengths.

There are rising expectations for a pair of first-year starting defensive ends — sophomore Mustafa Jalil and junior Deandre Coleman. Seniors Kendrick Payne and Aaron Tipoti provide a 1-2 punch at nose guard.

There is ample young talent at linebacker, where sophomore Chris McCain and junior Dan Camporeale combined for 13 starts a year ago. David Wilkerson, who started the Holiday Bowl as a freshman, was nicked up during much of spring ball.

Bigger questions remain in the secondary, where the Bears must replace both safeties and face health questions. Cornerback Marc Anthony sat out spring ball while rehabbing a shoulder injury and highly regarded corner Stefan McClure isn't a sure thing to be ready for the season after undergoing ACL and MCL surgery last November.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The biggest loss is at punter, where three-time all-conference pick Bryan Anger was so highly regarded that the Jacksonville Jaguars took him in the third round of the NFL Draft. The Bears are counting on incoming freshman Cole Leininger to secure the assignment.

The heir at placekicker is junior Vince D'Amato, who replaces Giorgio Tavecchio.

OVERVIEW

This is a big year for Jeff Tedford. The Bears are just 12-13 in the past two seasons, were overpowered 21-10 by Texas in the Holiday Bowl last season and haven't won a bowl since 2008. Cal opens rebuilt Memorial Stadium on Sept. 1 against Nevada, and there is pressure to win and fuel season-ticket sales that will help chip away the massive $321 million price tag.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Zach Kline: Kline, rated the nation's No. 2 pro-style quarterback by Rivals.com, enrolled early and delivered the game-winning touchdown and two-point conversion pass in Cal's spring game. He enters fall camp competing for the No. 3 spot.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**15**	**Zach Maynard***	**6-2**	**185**	**Sr.**
RB	**20**	**Isi Sofele***	**5-8**	**183**	**Sr.**
FB	48	Eric Stevens	6-0	242	Sr.
TE	11	Richard Rodgers	6-4	265	So.
WR	**21**	**Keenan Allen***	**6-3**	**206**	**Jr.**
WR	3	Maurice Harris	6-3	206	Fr.
LT	77	Tyler Rigsbee	6-5	290	Sr.
LG	73	Jordan Rigsbee	6-4	306	So.
C	**57**	**Brian Schwenke***	**6-4**	**312**	**Sr.**
RG	**65**	**Dominic Galas***	**6-1**	**286**	**Sr.**
RT	**75**	**Matt Summers-Gavin***	**6-4**	**293**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	90	Mustafa Jalil	6-2	302	So.
NG	96	Kendrick Payne	6-2	274	Sr.
DE	91	Deandre Coleman	6-5	311	Jr.
LB	**43**	**Dan Camporeale***	**6-3**	**243**	**Jr.**
LB	37	Robert Mullins	6-0	228	Sr.
LB	11	Nick Forbes	6-1	236	So.
LB	40	Chris McCain	6-6	230	So.
CB	**2**	**Marc Anthony***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
CB	**1**	**Steve Williams***	**5-10**	**189**	**Jr.**
SS	23	Josh Hill	5-10	207	Sr.
FS	6	Alex Logan	6-2	207	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	13	Vince D'Amato	6-1	206	Jr.
P	16	Cole Leininger	6-2	204	Fr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NEVADA
Sept. 8	SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 15	at Ohio State
Sept. 22	at USC
Sept. 29	ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 6	UCLA
Oct. 13	at Washington State
Oct. 20	STANFORD
Oct. 27	at Utah
Nov. 2	WASHINGTON
Nov. 10	OREGON
Nov. 17	at Oregon State

2011 RESULTS

W	FRESNO STATE	36-21
W	at Colorado (OT)	36-33
W	PRESBYTERIAN	63-12
L	at Washington	23-31
L	at Oregon	15-43
L	USC	9-30
W	UTAH	34-10
L	at UCLA	14-31
W	WASHINGTON STATE	30-7
W	OREGON STATE	23-6
L	at Stanford	28-31
W	at Arizona State	47-38
	Holiday Bowl	
L	vs. Texas	10-21

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.3	53
Rushing	154.9	62
Passing	246.6	46
Total	401.5	44
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.2	48
Rushing	128.7	34
Pass	204.2	37
Total	332.9	25
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-1	-0.08	67

RANKING

51 WASHINGTON STATE | COUGARS

Pac-12 rank: 8 Record: 4-8 Pac-10 record: 2-7 (6th, North) Stadium: Martin Stadium (32,248)

Photo by Gary A. Vasquez-US PRESSWIRE

"It's not being handed to us that we're going to win games just because Mike Leach is here. But we're going to win games."
— CB Daniel Simmons

COUGARS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mike Leach — At WSU: 1st year
OVERALL: 84-43, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Leach
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Breske

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2002, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2003, Holiday
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jeff Tuel, WR Marquess Wilson, WR Dominique Williams, LT John Fullington, LB Travis Long, DT Anthony Laurenzi, S Deone Bucannon

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: There's a talented senior quarterback and lots of capable receivers, but let's be frank — just as significant is the Mike Leach aura, if you will. The Cougars will score; his history guarantees it. The secondary has depth and playmakers, and the Cougs should provide some surprises with a new 3-4 look.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: An average-at-best offensive line has to keep Tuel upright — and healthy — in a wide-splits scheme with inviting pass-rush lanes. There's a severe lack of experienced linebackers, an unproven defensive line and Long is learning a new hybrid end/linebacker position. Figure on a lot of shootouts.

OFFENSE

Though new coach Mike Leach still considers it a competition, veteran Jeff Tuel got all the significant first-team reps at quarterback in spring ball after Connor Halliday continued to recover from a lacerated liver.

Tuel is coming off an injury-devastated season, but he's a 60 percent career passer with good feet and now has an edge in picking up Leach's progressions.

Second-team All-Pac-12 performer Marquess Wilson leads a deep receiving corps, but Leach has been vocal in demanding better effort from him and gifted freshman Dominique Williams.

The revelation of the spring might have been Andrei Lintz, under-utilized by the previous staff at tight end, but whose size and speed can be a weapon. Rickey Galvin and Marcus Mason look to be the leaders at a crowded running back spot, where pass catching ability is also prized.

The offensive line struggled to deal with Leach's preferred wide splits in the spring, but getting versatile Wade Jacobson and center Matt Goetz back from injuries should help. Tackle John Fullington looks ready to blossom into an all-league player.

DEFENSE

The Cougars have changed their look to a 3-4 and will surely take more chances under coordinator Mike Breske — starting with turning defensive end Travis Long, who's started 36 games, into a hybrid linebacker/end.

Xavier Cooper's development at the other end will go a long way in determining if the experiment succeeds, and the Cougars desperately need a big push in the middle. Freshman Robert Barber's arrival may add intrigue there.

Leach dismissed two starting linebackers before spring ball — C.J. Mizell and Sekopi Kaufusi — and that left a gaping hole that a number of converted running backs helped fill, led by Eric Oertel. Sophomore Chester Su'a and freshman Darryl Monroe are capable, if raw, and five freshmen will enliven the mix.

No area of the team is as deep and experienced as the secondary, where the Cougars have 95 career starts.

The standout is strong safety Deone Bucannon, but corner Damante Horton was probably the breakthrough player of 2011 with his team-leading four interceptions. Nolan Washington and Daniel Simmons are more than capable corners, and Tyree Toomer is a four-year starter at free safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

One of the more overlooked Cougars is kicker Andrew Furney, who set a school record for field goal accuracy — 14 of 16 — and was perfect on five attempts from 40 yards and beyond. But he has struggled with kickoffs, so junior college import Michael Bowlin is likely to handle that role as well as the punting.

OVERVIEW

Even with small gains at the end of the Paul Wulff era, this program needed a makeover — and got one with the bombshell hiring of Leach. The anticipation in Pullman is unprecedented, but teaching the Cougs how to win and not just compete is Leach's first job. WSU could take another baby step into a minor bowl and that should be expectation enough.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Gabriel Marks: WSU is thick with receivers, but don't bet against the freshman from Los Angeles. Coach Mike Leach said Marks "has an incredible tendency to outperform the other players around him." That meant catching 65 balls as a high school senior — and being his league's defensive MVP, too.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	Jeff Tuel*	6-3	223	Sr.
RB	5	Ricky Galvin*	5-8	171	So.
WR	86	Marquess Wilson*	6-4	183	Jr.
WR	80	Dominique Williams	6-2	180	Fr.
WR	82	Bobby Ratliff	6-2	194	So.
WR	87	Andrei Lintz*	6-5	2852	Sr.
LT	77	John Fullington*	6-5	290	Jr.
LG	55	Wade Jacobson	6-6	306	Sr.
C	64	Matt Goetz*	6-4	270	Jr.
RG	71	Dan Spitz*	6-7	300	Sr.
RT	76	Rico Forbes	6-6	287	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	96	Xavier Cooper	6-4	278	Fr.
DT	61	Anthony Laurenzi*	6-3	287	Sr.
DT	93	Lenard Williams*	6-2	250	Sr.
LB	89	Travis Long*	6-4	256	Sr.
LB	13	Darryl Monroe	6-1	213	Fr.
LB	45	Chester Su'a	6-1	226	So.
LB	21	Eric Oertel	6-1	197	Jr.
CB	24	Daniel Simmons*	5-10	193	Sr.
CB	6	Damante Horton*	5-10	174	Jr.
SS	20	Deone Bucannon*	6-1	190	Jr.
FS	15	Tyree Toomer*	5-11	199	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	49	Andrew Furney*	5-10	231	Jr.
P	46	Michael Bowlin	6-4	210	Jr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at BYU
Sept. 8	EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 15	at UNLV
Sept. 22	COLORADO
Sept. 29	vs. Oregon (Seattle)
Oct. 6	at Oregon State
Oct. 13	CALIFORNIA
Oct. 27	at Stanford
Nov. 3	at Utah
Nov. 10	UCLA
Nov. 17	at Arizona State
Nov. 23	WASHINGTON

2011 RESULTS

W	IDAHO STATE	64-21
W	UNLV	59-7
L	at San Diego State	24-42
W	at Colorado	31-27
L	at UCLA	25-28
L	STANFORD	14-44
L	OREGON STATE	21-44
L	at Oregon	28-43
L	at California	7-30
W	ARIZONA STATE	37-27
L	UTAH (OT)	27-30
L	at Washington	21-38

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.8	45
Rushing	100.2	111
Passing	322.3	9
Total	422.4	33
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.8	95
Rushing	157.2	63
Pass	252.4	93
Total	409.6	82
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-4	-0.33	85

RANKING

59 ARIZONA | WILDCATS

Pac-12 rank: 9 Record: 4-8 overall Pac-12: 2-7 (T-5th, South) Stadium: Arizona (51,811)

Photo by Liam Foley/Icon SMI

"I shouldn't expect too much in the first year in the system, but with Matt Scott, I'm going to expect a lot."
— Coach Rich Rodriguez, on his starting QB

WILDCATS at a GLANCE

COACH: Rich Rodriguez — At Arizona: 1st year; overall: 120-84-2, 18 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Calvin Magee, Rod Smith
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Casteel

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1993, Pac-10 co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010, Alamo
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Matt Scott, RB Ka'Deem Carey, C Kyle Quinn, LB Jake Fischer, LB Brian Wagner, CB Jonathan McKnight, S Tra'Mayne Bondurant

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Rodriguez reunited the majority of his winning coaching staff from West Virginia, and these guys know exactly what they want and how to get it done. The offensive line returns intact — if right tackle Fabbians Ebbele gets back on the team after spring legal issues. Scott gives UA a chance to make the read-option offense work.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Arizona is adjusting to tricky new schemes on both sides of the ball. Rodriguez was disappointed in the collective strength and conditioning of the Cats, and his relentless, fast-paced practices often left players gassed in the spring. Starting LT Mickey Baucus missed spring because of a back injury.

OFFENSE

New coach Rich Rodriguez spent his first spring in Tucson low-balling expectations for the Arizona debut of his read-option offense, the increasingly popular college scheme he devised at Glenville State about two decades ago.

The transition from a quick-passing spread will take time, and Rodriguez doesn't expect to have the full playbook in until his second season. But he does have the most important piece: An experienced, dual-threat quarterback.

Senior Matt Scott, who redshirted last season behind Nick Foles, showed a good grasp of the no-huddle attack in the spring, although he couldn't show off his running skills because Rodriguez didn't dare let Scott take a hit.

Scott, who has started five games in his career, has to stay healthy. Every other quarterback on the roster is new to the program; none has thrown a pass in a college game.

Rodriguez mostly shrugged this spring when asked about the progress of players or position groups, but he did have kind words about the running backs.

Sophomore Ka'Deem Carey, tough and fast enough, has star potential. Daniel Jenkins is a quick-cut back eager for a bigger opportunity. Taimi Tutogi is a punishing big-back option.

The receiving corps was gutted by graduation. Senior Dan Buckner needs to emerge as a bigger threat. Sophomore Tyler Slavin looked good in the spring. Slot receiver Richard Morrison could end up as the second-string quarterback.

DEFENSE

Rodriguez's biggest recruit was Jeff Casteel, his longtime defensive coordinator at West Virginia.

Casteel installed his unique 3-3-5 odd stack scheme this spring, and the different attacking angles should help a defense that had trouble generating pressure on its own last season. The Wildcats had a scant 10 sacks.

Arizona is deep up front, but the mix-and-match possibilities won't be settled until fall.

Linebacker Jake Fischer, who returned this spring from an ACL injury, will be a centerpiece, the kind of player who, as Rodriguez says, "loves" playing football, not just "likes it." Akron transfer Brian Wagner will man the middle.

The five-man secondary is thin, made worse when safety Adam Hall, who was trying to return from a 2011 ACL injury, suffered another torn ACL in the spring game. Sophomore Tra'Mayne Bondurant, who emerged in the second half of last season, should be excellent in the playmaking "Spur" safety spot.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kickoff man John Bonano stepped in at midseason to stabilize the placekicking (8 of 12 on field-goal attempts), although he was challenged this spring by walk-on Jake Smith. Punter Kyle Dugandzic averaged 46.0 yards per punt in 2011.

Rodriguez has to clean up this area, which has been a comedy of errors with poor coverage, failed fakes and falling victim to opponents' trick plays.

OVERVIEW

Former coach Mike Stoops improved the program but had stalled. Rodriguez has the energy, personality and know-how to lead Arizona to another level, and he definitely has something to prove after his messy three years at Michigan, where there was plenty of blame to go around. Consider this a honeymoon season, with expectations not rising until 2013.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Brian Wagner: The graduate student transfer from Akron is exactly what Arizona needed in a thin, inexperienced linebacker corps. He is the nation's leading returning tackler (13.4 per game) and is smart and savvy. He'll have to adjust, though, to the speed of the Pac-12.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	Matt Scott	6-3	197	Sr.
RB	25	Ka'Deem Carey	5-10	203	So.
RB	**31**	**Taimi Tutogi***	**6-1**	**260**	**Sr.**
WR	11	Tyler Slavin	6-2	200	So.
WR	15	Dan Buckner	6-4	214	Sr.
SR	14	Richard Morrison	5-11	183	Jr.
RT	74	Jacob Arzouman	6-5	272	Fr.
RG	**72**	**Trace Biskin***	**6-5**	**282**	**Sr.**
C	**76**	**Kyle Quinn***	**6-3**	**294**	**Sr.**
LG	**62**	**Chris Putton***	**6-4**	**282**	**Jr.**
LT	**68**	**Mickey Baucus***	**6-8**	**290**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	96	Willie Mobley	6-2	270	Sr.
DT	**91**	**Sione Tuihalamaka***	**6-2**	**275**	**Jr.**
DE	43	Justin Washington	6-2	268	Jr.
LB	33	Jake Fischer	5-11	215	Jr.
LB	40	Brian Wagner	6-0	230	Sr.
LB	19	Hank Hobson	6-2	224	So.
CB	6	Jonathan McKnight	5-11	170	So.
CB	**5**	**Shaquille Richardson***	**6-1**	**188**	**Jr.**
S	**27**	**Tra'Mayne Bondurant***	**5-10**	**208**	**So.**
S	**2**	**Marquis Flowers***	**6-3**	**221**	**Jr.**
S	38	Jared Tevis	5-10	198	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**15**	**John Bonano***	**6-0**	**216**	**Sr.**
P	**13**	**Kyle Dugandzic***	**5-11**	**204**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	TOLEDO
Sept. 8	OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 15	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 22	at Oregon
Sept. 29	OREGON STATE
Oct. 6	at Stanford
Oct. 20	WASHINGTON
Oct. 27	USC
Nov. 3	at UCLA
Nov. 10	COLORADO
Nov. 17	at Utah
Nov. 23	ARIZONA STATE

2011 RESULTS

W	NORTHERN ARIZONA	41-10
L	at Oklahoma State	14-37
L	STANFORD	10-37
L	OREGON	31-56
L	at USC	41-48
L	at Oregon State	27-37
W	UCLA	48-12
L	at Washington	31-42
L	UTAH	21-34
L	at Colorado	29-48
W	at Arizona State	31-27
W	LOUISIANA	45-37

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.8	38
Rushing	94.5	114
Passing	370.8	3
Total	465.3	16
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.4	107
Rushing	161.6	67
Pass	298.9	119
Total	460.5	110
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-5	-0.42	91

RANKING

63 ARIZONA STATE | SUN DEVILS

Pac-12 rank: 10 Record: 6-7 Pac-12 record: 4-5 (T-3rd, South) Stadium: Sun Devil Stadium (71,706)

Jamal Miles

Photo by: Chris Pondy/Icon SMI

"The biggest (differences from last year) are discipline and rules. And you don't want to break the rules."
— LB Brandon Magee

SUN DEVILS at a GLANCE

COACH: Todd Graham — At Arizona State: 1st year
OVERALL: 49-29, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Norvell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Paul Randolph, Ron West

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1996
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 4 offense, 4 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Mike Bercovici, QB Michael Eubank, RB Cameron Marshall, WR Jamal Miles, LT Evan Finkenberg, DT Will Sutton, LB Brandon Magee, CB Osahon Irabor

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Marshall should be one of the Pac-12's top talents, leading a deep group of running backs. Miles is a threat every time he touches the ball, both on offense and special teams. Expect ASU to get creative in getting him touches. Magee adds speed and leadership to a young defense; Irabor has all-conference potential.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The quarterbacks will learn as they go. The receivers, outside of Miles, are inconsistent and unproven. The Sun Devils also are thin at linebacker.

OFFENSE

New coach Todd Graham brings a fast-paced, no-huddle offense, but he doesn't have a proven quarterback to run it. He almost did, but Brock Osweiler left early and became a second-round NFL draft pick.

ASU has talent at the position, just not experience. Sophomores Mike Bercovici and Taylor Kelly, as well as redshirt freshman Michael Eubank, have yet to start a collegiate contest. They battled throughout spring, a competition that will pick up in the fall.

Senior Cameron Marshall is the top rushing threat, provided he recovers from minor ankle surgery. Senior James Morrison thrived in Marshall's absence during the spring, earning the nickname "Tank."

Junior Kyle Middlebrooks and sophomore Deantre Lewis also will get chances, although Lewis still hasn't fully recovered from a gun-shot wound that kept him out last season.

The offensive line held up better than expected in the spring, but depth is a concern. The Sun Devils also lack proven receivers.

DEFENSE

ASU plans to use an attacking, multiple-front scheme, but will have to rely on several inexperienced players to pull it off.

The Sun Devils do, however, have a building block in senior linebacker Brandon Magee. So much attention went to Vontaze Burfict last season, but during 2011 fall camp, former defensive coordinator Craig Bray singled out Magee as the unit's best player. Three days later, Magee ruptured an Achilles' tendon and was lost for the season.

Magee participated in non-contract drills during the spring, but promised to be 100 percent in the fall. He's expected to move inside in ASU's 3-4 scheme. Those around him won't be as experienced. In fact, no other linebacker on ASU's roster has started a game at the position.

Junior Will Sutton and senior Corey Adams anchor the front, a group Graham calls the defense's best. Junior college transfer Mike Pennel also is expected to contribute.

The Sun Devils have playmakers in the secondary. Junior cornerback Osahon Irabor, a two-year starter, was one of the spring's top performers. Opposite Irabor, senior Deveron Carr needs to hold off Robert Nelson, a transfer from Louisiana-Monroe.

Alden Darby, a playmaker, teams with senior Keelan Johnson at safety, although junior college transfer Chris Young could challenge.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jamal Miles is electric as a kick and punt returner. The senior receiver earned second-team All-Pac-12 status last season, returning two kickoffs for touchdowns and a punt for another score.

Sophomore kicker Alex Garoutte had a rough time last season, making 15 of 22 field-goal attempts. His spring wasn't much better, although he did finish strong.

OVERVIEW

The Sun Devils did well adapting to Graham's disciplined approach in the spring, but this is a team with a lot of questions. The new quarterback will need time to grow. The defense will need time to adjust to a new scheme. As a result, expectations won't be high. Still, Graham can win over fans by reducing penalties and pulling off a surprise or two.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB D.J. Foster: Foster, who can play running back or slot receiver, was the jewel of Graham's first recruiting class, a four-star prospect from Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro High. Foster produced a state-record 60 touchdowns as a senior.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	2	Mike Bercovici	6-1	202	So.
RB	**6**	**Cameron Marshall***	**5-11**	**223**	**Sr.**
HB	87	Chris Coyle	6-3	230	Jr.
WR	80	J.J. Holliday	6-0	170	Jr.
WR	82	Kevin Ozier	6-0	198	Jr.
WR	**32**	**Jamal Miles***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
LT	**62**	**Evan Finkenberg***	**6-6**	**299**	**Jr.**
LG	74	Jamil Douglas	6-4	284	So.
C	67	Kody Koebensky	6-4	294	Jr.
RG	**72**	**Andrew Sampson***	**6-3**	**304**	**Sr.**
RT	71	Brice Schwab	6-7	303	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**90**	**Will Sutton***	**6-2**	**271**	**Jr.**
NT	68	Corey Adams	6-3	283	Sr.
DE	**5**	**Junior Onyeali***	**5-11**	**245**	**Jr.**
LB	52	Carl Bradford	6-0	237	So.
LB	46	Kipeli Koniseti	6-3	244	Jr.
LB	8	Brandon Magee	5-11	233	Sr.
LB	31	Anthony Jones	6-2	212	Jr.
CB	**24**	**Osahon Irabor***	**5-11**	**176**	**Jr.**
CB	**1**	**Deveron Carr***	**5-11**	**193**	**Sr.**
SS	4	Alden Darby	5-10	187	Jr.
FS	10	Keelan Johnson	6-0	202	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**25**	**Alex Garoutte***	**6-1**	**192**	**So.**
P	**47**	**Josh Hubner***	**6-4**	**231**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 8	ILLINOIS
Sept. 15	at Missouri
Sept. 22	UTAH
Sept. 29	at California
Oct. 11	at Colorado
Oct. 18	OREGON
Oct. 27	UCLA
Nov. 3	at Oregon State
Nov. 10	at USC
Nov. 17	WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 23	at Arizona

2011 RESULTS

W	UC DAVIS	48-14
W	MISSOURI (OT)	37-30
L	at Illinois	14-17
W	USC	43-22
W	OREGON STATE	35-20
W	at Utah	35-14
L	at Oregon	27-41
W	COLORADO	48-14
L	at UCLA	28-29
L	at Washington State	27-37
L	ARIZONA	27-31
L	CALIFORNIA	38-47
	Las Vegas Bowl	
L	vs. Boise State	24-56

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.2	28
Rushing	129.1	85
Passing	316.7	10
Total	445.8	25
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.6	74
Rushing	149.1	57
Pass	273.0	108
Total	422.1	91
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+9	+ 0.69	17

RANKING

65 OREGON STATE | BEAVERS

Pac-12 rank: 11 Record: 3-9 Pac-12 record: 3-6 (5th, North) Stadium: Reser Stadium (45,674)

Photo by Steve Conner/Icon SMI

Markus Wheaton

"This team is capable of going to a bowl game. We are getting better, and we'll see where we go with this team."
— Coach Mike Riley

BEAVERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mike Riley — At Oregon State and overall: 72-63, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Danny Langsdorf
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Banker

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2009, Las Vegas
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Sean Mannion, WR Markus Wheaton, WR Brandin Cooks, DE Scott Crichton, DE Dylan Wynn, LB Michael Doctor, CB Jordan Poyer

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Many of the young players at the skilled positions from a year ago gained experience. That should lead to a better showing this season, particularly in the passing game.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line will be revamped in training camp with the return of injured starters and infusion of recruits. If they can't mesh quickly, the run and pass blocking will be late developing. A game vs. Wisconsin and two Pac-12 road games in the first month will be tricky.

OFFENSE

Until there's a consistent running game, the offense depends on the arm of quarterback Sean Mannion. The sophomore showed his inexperience as a first-year starter last season, but coach Mike Riley expects him to improve dramatically.

Mannion possesses the size, at 6-5, and the arm to be the next standout pocket passer for the Beavers. He threw for 3,332 yards and 16 touchdowns with a 64.5 percent completion rate as a freshman. The only issue — and it's a big one — was his 18 interceptions.

A porous offensive line was the main cause of the problem, along with opponents who knew Mannion would pass most of the time, since the running attack averaged only 86.9 yards a game.

The Beavers are depending on newcomers, freshman Isaac Seumalo and junior transfer Stan Hasiak, to make an impact on the line. The return of standout junior tackle Michael Philipp, who sat out last year due to minor knee surgery, will help.

If Mannion has time, there are plenty of targets in senior Markus Wheaton and up-and-coming sophomore Brandin Cooks. Obum Gwacham, at 6-5, moved to the slot and is expected to be used more.

Freshman running back Storm Woods redshirted last season and could spark the offense. Terron Ward was the starter at the end due to his consistency.

Malcolm Agnew rushed for a team-leading 419 yards, but was hampered with long-term lingering hamstring issues. If he's healthy, the Beavers have three capable ball carriers.

DEFENSE

The secondary is the strength, if the front seven can pressure the quarterback enough. Both cornerbacks, Jordan Poyer and Rashaad Reynolds, return.

Safety Anthony Watkins, the team's leading tackler last season, had offseason shoulder surgery and missed spring practice. Ryan Murphy established himself as a playmaker at safety in the spring.

The outside linebacker combo of Michael Doctor and D.J. Welch gives the defense speed. And middle linebacker Feti Unga comes back healthy after a calf injury limited his participation much of last season.

Defensive ends Scott Crichton and Dylan Wynn anchor the line as returning starters. Castro Masaniai returns at tackle but hasn't made it through the past two seasons due to a broken leg both years. Andrew Seumalo and Mana Tuivailala provide depth inside.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Trevor Romaine hopes to rebound from last season's inconsistencies. He was 15 of 22 on field-goal attempts, with five misses inside 49 yards.

Tim McMullen, a transfer from Division II Humboldt State, takes over for four-year starter Johnny Hekker. McMullen, an Australian, has punted for only one season but averaged 41 yards.

OVERVIEW

There's a sense of urgency from the players and coaches due to the pressure of two straight losing seasons. The Beavers went with a young team last year and battled injuries. If they can stay healthy this year and learn from their mistakes, the Beavers have the ability to reach a bowl game. Success will depend on how the offensive line develops.

TOP NEWCOMER

OL Isaac Seumalo: He's a Rivals.com four-star recruit and the son of defensive line coach Joe Seumalo. The Beavers are looking for the freshman to possibly start, maybe at center. "He'll be able to play wherever we need him," coach Mike Riley said.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**4**	**Sean Mannion***	**6-5**	**215**	**So.**
RB	28	Terron Ward	5-7	192	So.
WR	**2**	**Markus Wheaton***	**6-0**	**180**	**Sr.**
WR	13	Brandin Cooks	5-9	177	So.
WR	**23**	**Jordan Bishop***	**6-3**	**207**	**Sr.**
TE	**82**	**Colby Prince***	**6-5**	**262**	**Sr.**
LT	**64**	**Colin Kelly***	**6-5**	**298**	**Sr.**
LG	**69**	**Josh Andrews***	**6-2**	**297**	**Jr.**
C	65	Roman Sapolu	6-2	284	So.
RG	**71**	**Grant Enger***	**6-5**	**282**	**Jr.**
RT	77	Michael Philipp	6-4	324	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**95**	**Scott Crichton***	**6-3**	**293**	**So.**
DT	49	Andrew Seumalo	6-3	287	Sr.
DT	**98**	**Castro Masaniai***	**6-3**	**351**	**Sr.**
DE	**45**	**Dylan Wynn***	**6-2**	**265**	**So.**
LB	**40**	**Michael Doctor***	**6-0**	**223**	**Jr.**
LB	**41**	**Feti Unga***	**6-1**	**248**	**Sr.**
LB	4	D.J. Welch	6-2	220	So.
CB	**14**	**Jordan Poyer***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
CB	**16**	**Rashaad Reynolds***	**5-10**	**186**	**Jr.**
S	**3**	**Anthony Watkins***	**6-1**	**217**	**Sr.**
S	25	Ryan Murphy	6-3	213	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
12	**K**	**Trevor Romaine***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
26	P	Tim McMullen	6-3	232	Jr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 8	WISCONSIN
Sept. 22	at UCLA
Sept. 29	at Arizona
Oct. 6	WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 13	at BYU
Oct. 20	UTAH
Oct. 27	at Washington
Nov. 3	ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 10	at Stanford
Nov. 17	CALIFORNIA
Nov. 24	OREGON

2011 RESULTS

L	SACRAMENTO STATE (OT)	28-29
L	at Wisconsin	0-35
L	UCLA	19-27
L	at Arizona State	20-35
W	ARIZONA	37-27
L	BYU	28-38
W	at Washington State	44-21
L	at Utah	8-27
L	STANFORD	13-38
L	at California	6-23
W	WASHINGTON	38-21
L	at Oregon	21-49

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.8	100
Rushing	86.9	118
Passing	286.8	19
Total	373.7	73
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.8	89
Rushing	196.8	101
Pass	214.4	46
Total	411.3	84
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-8	-0.67	100

RANKING

77 COLORADO | BUFFALOES

Pac-12 rank: 12 Record: 3-10 Pac 12 record: 2-7 (T-5th, South) Stadium: Folsum Field (53,613)

Photo by Dave Sizer

Douglas Rippy

"We don't have the luxury of trying to let guys ease their way into it. We have to go."
— Coach Jon Embree, on having a young team

BUFFALOES at a GLANCE

COACH: Jon Embree — At Colorado and overall: 3-10, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Bieniemy
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Brown

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001, Big 12
LAST BOWL: 2007, Independence
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Connor Wood, QB Nick Hirschman, RB Tony Jones, DL Will Pericak, LB Jon Major, LB Douglas Rippy, CB Greg Henderson, S Ray Polk

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offensive line and linebacker corps are the most experienced groups on the team. The Buffs could be much better in the run game, though one key will be a quarterback stepping in and demonstrating competency in the passing game to prevent defenses from loading up against the run.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: This team will be among the youngest in the nation. A quarterback needs to take control of the job early to avoid a controversy. Standout WR Paul Richardson tore his ACL in the spring and is out for the season. Players need to emerge at wide receiver and defensive line, among other spots.

OFFENSE

Every position is up for grabs, except for three spots on the line, and it's likely that true freshmen will get major opportunities at receiver, tight end and running back.

Quarterback Connor Wood, a transfer from Texas, took every snap with the first-team in spring ball because fellow third-year sophomore Nick Hirschman was injured. They will compete in August, and coaches might throw a wild card in the mix if former Kansas starter Jordan Webb transfers to Boulder.

The Buffs will still build their offense around running the ball.

Sophomore Tony Jones will be the starter at tailback, occasionally making way for freshmen such as Davien Payne, Donta Abron and Terrence Crowder.

The line has a chance to be good, led by left tackle David Bakhtiari, selected second team All-Pac-12 as a sophomore. Gus Handler is developing into a future pro. Big right tackle Jack Harris is back from an injury.

There is very little experience at wide receiver or tight end, where converted defensive end Nick Kasa topped the depth chart at the end of spring.

DEFENSE

The potential trouble spot is up front. Coaches are expecting to play at least five or six true freshman defensive linemen.

Senior lineman Will Pericak might be the player this team can least afford to lose to injury. Freshman Josh Tupou is likely to start — or at least be on the field quite a bit — from the outset.

At one end spot, Juda Parker and Chidera Uzo-Diribe return to make a solid pass-rushing duo. Look for true freshmen Kisima Jagne to earn playing time as well.

The strength of the defense is its linebackers and safeties. Middle linebacker Douglas Rippy is coming off a torn ACL, but he was leading the team in tackles in the middle of last season before the injury. Fellow senior Jon Major ended up leading the team in stops. Junior Derrick Webb makes plays all over the field and is starting to come into his own.

Tough-guy free safety Ray Polk has a lot of football under his belt and will need to lead young cornerbacks Greg Henderson and Yuri Wright, a true freshman.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Darragh O'Neill stole the job last summer from Zach Grossnickle despite never having played in any football game. His soccer background gives him the ability to punt with either foot. He averaged 42.6 yards per kick, but needs to work on hang time.

Will Oliver made 11 of 16 field-goal attempts as a freshman and would have had better totals if not for breakdowns in protection that led to four blocks.

OVERVIEW

The bulk of the roster is in the freshman and sophomore classes, and the challenge will be getting that young talent to play at a high level, particularly early. This team likely will have a first-time starter at quarterback, and that player could be the key to the Buffs navigating a season of growing pains.

TOP NEWCOMER

CB Yuri Wright: He was the highest-rated player the program has landed in several years, and he comes at a position of need. Now, Wright — from New Jersey powerhouse Don Bosco Prep — has to live up to his billing as the nation's No. 7 cornerback prospect, according to Rivals.com.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	5	Connor Wood	6-3	225	So.
RB	26	Tony Jones	5-7	185	So.
FB	47	Alex Wood	6-2	250	Jr.
WR	87	Tyler McCulloch	6-5	210	So.
WR	22	Nelson Spruce	6-2	195	Fr.
TE	84	Nick Kasa	6-6	260	Sr.
LT	**59**	**David Bakhtiari***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
LG	71	Alexander Lewis	6-6	285	So.
C	**76**	**Gus Handler***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
RG	**53**	**Ryan Dannewitz***	**6-6**	**310**	**Sr.**
RT	**75**	**Jack Harris***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	56	Juda Parker	6-3	245	So.
NT	N/A	Josh Tupou	6-3	305	Fr.
DE	**83**	**Will Pericak***	**6-4**	**285**	**Sr.**
JACK	96	Chidera Uzo-Diribe	6-3	255	Jr.
LB	**3**	**Douglas Rippy***	**6-3**	**240**	**Sr.**
LB	**1**	**Derrick Webb***	**6-0**	**230**	**Jr.**
LB	**31**	**Jon Major***	**6-2**	**240**	**Sr.**
CB	N/A	Yuri Wright	6-2	175	Fr.
CB	**20**	**Greg Henderson***	**5-11**	**180**	**So.**
SS	13	Parker Orms	5-11	195	Jr.
FS	**26**	**Ray Polk***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**28**	**Will Oliver***	**5-11**	**195**	**So.**
P	**8**	**Darragh O'Neill***	**6-2**	**185**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Colorado State (Denver)
Sept. 8	SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 15	at Fresno State
Sept. 22	at Washington State
Sept. 29	UCLA
Oct. 11	ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 20	at USC
Oct. 27	at Oregon
Nov. 3	STANFORD
Nov. 10	at Arizona
Nov. 17	WASHINGTON
Nov. 23	UTAH

2011 RESULTS

L	at Hawaii	17-34
L	CALIFORNIA	33-36
W	COLORADO STATE	28-14
L	at Ohio State	17-37
L	WASHINGTON STATE	27-31
L	at Stanford	7-48
L	at Washington	24-52
L	OREGON	2-45
L	at Arizona State	14-48
L	USC	17-42
W	ARIZONA	48-29
L	at UCLA	6-45
W	at Utah	17-14

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.8	109
Rushing	108.7	106
Passing	237.6	57
Total	346.3	92
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	36.5	109
Rushing	183.9	89
Pass	255.4	97
Total	439.3	102
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.31	84

PICKING **THE BIG EAST**

Opportunity knocks for Big East teams in season of transition

There's an unmistakable sound that can be heard at every Big East football school this fall.

It's opportunity knocking.

This is a transition year in the ever-changing league, with Boise State, San Diego State, SMU, Houston, Memphis and Central Florida set to join next season. Those additions will either bloat the Big East to 14 teams (if Pittsburgh or Syracuse stay one more year before bolting to the ACC) or 12.

But for now, in this rare window of opportunity, it's an eight-team conference that no longer includes perennial power West Virginia but has welcomed Temple back to the fold.

Which means getting to a BCS bowl game has never been easier — and likely won't be ever again.

That's no small thing in a league where six of the eight schools haven't been to a BCS game since the 2006 season and three — Rutgers, USF and Temple — have never been at all.

Louisville, picked to finish seventh last season because of an infusion of youth, particularly on offense, is the prohibitive favorite after managing to finish in a three-way tie for first last year.

The Cardinals are still young, but talented sophomore quarterback Teddy Bridgewater and Co. have a full year of experience. And the defense, a top 25 unit nationally last season, returns a solid corps of starters.

"Because of what we have coming back, a lot of people think we should be picked (first)," Louisville coach Charlie Strong said. "This could be a special group, but it's about work."

If not, Rutgers, which has never won a league title, appears poised to make a run at the Cardinals — the teams meet in the regular season-finale for both in an ESPN Friday night game — after being picked for last in 2011 and finishing 9-4 overall.

First-year coach Kyle Flood, Rutgers' long-time offensive line coach, has a defense that could be top 10 caliber, led by last year's co-Big East Defensive Player of the Year Khaseem Greene at linebacker and an offense that just has to be good enough not to lose games.

The key for the Scarlet Knights is getting solid play at quarterback after returnees Gary Nova and Chas Dodd shared the starting job last season.

"We embrace the expectations. I think if you ask any college football player in the country if they want to win a championship next year, I think they'd all tell you 'Yes,'" Flood said. "And I think our players are no different. They'd tell you the same thing."

After Louisville and Rutgers, there should be a wild scramble.

New Pittsburgh coach Paul Chryst will

Big East Conference Picks

	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Louisville	Cards have a top-notch defense and a rising star in QB Teddy Bridgewater.	Not a lot, but now there's pressure with bigger expectations.	Last year's biggest Big East surprise is this season's clear favorite.
2. Rutgers	Defense could be even better than last year's top 15 unit.	Same as 2011 — uncertainty at quarterback and a revamped offensive line.	Scarlet Knights' title hopes hinge on the offense showing improvement.
3. Pittsburgh	RB Ray Graham provides star power and roster talent is still plentiful.	Panthers are on their fourth coach in three years; defense is suspect.	The play of QB Tino Sunseri and a rebuilt defense are the keys.
4. Cincinnati	QB Munchie Legaux has big potential and the defense could be tough.	Offense was ravaged by key losses and the O-line is a concern.	The Bearcats will go as far as Legaux and the defense can take them.
5. Connecticut	RB Lyle McCombs and an experienced defense provide bowl hopes.	An absence of playmakers, uncertainty at QB and with the O-line.	Five quarterbacks are on the roster. If one is solid, UConn will be as well.
6. South Florida	Roster is brimming with experience, starting with QB B.J. Daniels.	How do the Bulls erase the memory of a 1-7 finish after a 4-0 start?	This can be a dangerous team ... if you believe USF can shed its underachieving ways.
7. Syracuse	The emergence of QB Ryan Nassib will jazz up a drab offense.	The Big East's worst defense a year ago doesn't look much better.	Another losing season — but not another last-place finish. Thanks, Temple!
8. Temple	The Owls are back in the Big East. Isn't that enough for now?	Beyond QB Chris Coyer and RB Matt Brown, there's not much star power.	Too much inexperience for the Owls to make a triumphant return to league.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-BIG EAST Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Teddy Bridgewater	So.	Louisville
RB	Ray Graham	Sr.	Pittsburgh
RB	Lyle McCombs	So.	Connecticut
WR	Devin Street	Jr.	Pittsburgh
WR	Brandon Coleman	So.	Rutgers
TE	Ryan Griffin	Sr.	Connecticut
C	Mario Benavides	Sr.	Louisville
OL	Justin Pugh	Sr.	Syracuse
OL	Kaleb Johnson	So.	Rutgers
OL	Mark Popek	Sr.	South Florida
OL	Jake Smith	So.	Louisville
AP	Jeremy Deering	Jr.	Rutgers
K	Maikon Bonani	Sr.	South Florida

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Aaron Donald	Jr.	Pittsburgh
DL	Ryne Giddins	Jr.	South Florida
DL	Scott Vallone	Sr.	Rutgers
DL	Trevardo Williams	Sr.	Connecticut
LB	Khaseem Greene	Sr.	Rutgers
LB	Sio Moore	Sr.	Connecticut
LB	Preston Brown	Jr.	Louisville
DB	Duron Harmon	Sr.	Rutgers
DB	Adrian Bushell	Sr.	Louisville
DB	Jarred Holley	Sr.	Pittsburgh
DB	Hakeem Smith	Jr.	Louisville
P	Pat O'Donnell	Jr.	Cincinnati

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Ryan Nassib	Sr.	Syracuse
RB	Jawan Jamison	So.	Rutgers
RB	Demetris Murray	Sr.	South Florida
WR	Alec Lemon	Sr.	Syracuse
WR	Anthony McClung	Jr.	Cincinnati
TE	D.C. Jefferson	Sr.	Rutgers
C	Ryan Turnley	Sr.	Pittsburgh
OL	Quinterrius Eatmon	So.	South Florida
OL	Chris Jacobson	Sr.	Pittsburgh
OL	John Miller	So.	Louisville
OL	Austin Bujnoch	Jr.	Cincinnati
AP	Matt Brown	Sr.	Temple
K	Brandon McManus	Sr.	Temple

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Jesse Joseph	Sr.	Connecticut
DL	Walter Stewart	Sr.	Cincinnati
DL	Dan Giordano	Sr.	Cincinnati
DL	Levi Brown	Jr.	Temple
LB	DeDe Lattimore	Jr.	South Florida
LB	Marquis Spruill	Jr.	Syracuse
LB	Steve Beauharnais	Sr.	Rutgers
DB	Logan Ryan	Jr.	Rutgers
DB	Drew Frey	Sr.	Cincinnati
DB	Justin Gildea	Sr.	Temple
DB	Kayvon Webster	Sr.	South Florida
P	Justin Doerner	Sr.	Rutgers

try to implement a smash-mouth style of offense, and he has the workhorse back to do it with in Ray Graham, who was on his way to Big East Player of the Year honors before suffering a knee injury. The Panthers have some question marks on defense, however.

South Florida, which never seems to live up to expectations, returns 16 starters but has to figure out a way to reverse a 1-7 free-fall to end last season. The Bulls have the most dangerous dual-threat quarterback in the Big East in senior B.J. Daniels.

Connecticut and Cincinnati are mysteries (the Huskies to a lesser extent).

The Bearcats have a promising young quarterback in Munchie Legaux but lost most of their star power on offense. They will have to be carried early by a veteran defense.

Two years removed from a surprising BCS bowl appearance, Connecticut will rely on a familiar formula — a power running game and defense — to return to their bowl ways.

The Huskies have an 1,100-yard rusher back in sophomore Lyle McCombs and a defense that returns nine starters, although pass defense was an issue last season. UConn's key to success on offense will depend on which of its several quarterback hopefuls takes over, and whether he can be consistent.

Syracuse returns quarterback Ryan Nassib from a 2,685-yard passing season, but the Orange was a bad defensive team that doesn't appear to be vastly improved. Syracuse has finished last in the league standings in six of the past seven years.

After being booted out of the league following the 2004 season, Temple is back, thanks in large part to the Big East's desperation to immediately replace West Virginia. But the timing couldn't be worse for the Owls, who are in a rebuilding stage. They should get solid play from quarterback Chris Coyer and have a dynamic playmaker in running back Matt Brown.

— Tom Luicci

Most Valuable Player

Teddy Bridgewater
QB, Louisville

Offensive Player of the Year

Ray Graham
RB, Pittsburgh

Defensive Player of the Year

Khaseem Greene
LB, Rutgers

Newcomer of the Year

Darius Hamilton
DL, Rutgers

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Teddy Bridgewater	Louisville
Strongest arm	Teddy Bridgewater	Louisville
Best scrambler	B.J. Daniels	South Florida
Coolest in the clutch	Teddy Bridgewater	Louisville
Toughest to bring down	Ray Graham	Pittsburgh
Best Hands	Alec Lemon	Syracuse
Most dangerous deep threat	Brandon Coleman	Rutgers
Best pass blocker	Justin Pugh	Syracuse
Best run blocker	Mark Popek	South Florida
Best cover corner	Logan Ryan	Rutgers
Best pass rusher	Trevardo Williams	Connecticut
Special teams demon	Adrian Bushell	Louisville

THE **BIG** ONES

Sept. 1	
Northwestern at Syracuse	Orange won a shootout in last meeting in 2009.
Sept. 2	
Kentucky at Louisville	Cards beat state rivals in Lexington last year.
Sept. 6	
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati (East Rutheford, NJ)	League opener for two fringe Big East contenders.
Sept. 8	
USC vs. Syracuse	Trojans make rare trek East to MetLife Stadium.
Sept. 13	
Rutgers at South Florida	Bulls catch Knights on ESPN a week before Arkansas.
Sept. 15	
Connecticut at Maryland	Huskies face former coach Randy Edsall here.
North Carolina at Louisville	ACC-Big East meetings always matter to latter.
Virginia Tech at Pittsburgh	Panthers will be tested by QB Logan Thomas.
Sept. 22	
Rutgers at Arkansas	Defense is RU's best hope to be competitive.
Temple at Penn State	Owls hope to end 71-year drought vs. Lions.
Sept. 29	
Cincinnati vs. Virginia Tech (Landover, MD)	Bearcats eye a huge upset at FedEx Field.
Louisville at Southern Miss	Old C-USA rivals met in 2010 bowl game.
Florida State at South Florida	Seminoles still stinging over 2009 upset loss.
Oct. 5	
Pitt at Syracuse	Final Big East meeting for ACC-bound schools?
Oct. 6	
Connecticut at Rutgers	Huskies ruined Knights' league title hopes in 2011.
South Florida at Temple	Owls' first Big East game since returning to league.
Oct. 13	
Louisville at Pittsburgh	Panthers held Cards to 280 yards in victory last year.
Oct. 20	
South Florida at Louisville	Bulls hold 4-3 advantage since both joined Big East.
Oct. 26	
Cincinnati at Louisville	Keg of Nails features two promising sophomore QBs.
Nov. 3	
Pittsburgh at Notre Dame	Irish escaped with a 15-12 win at Pitt last year.
Nov. 17	
South Florida at Miami	Past two meetings have been decided by a field goal.
Rutgers at Cincinnati	Scarlet Knights manhandled QB Munchie Legaux last year.
Nov. 23	
Syracuse at Temple	Orange could be playing final Big East game here.
Nov. 29	
Louisville at Rutgers	ESPN Friday game matches league title hopefuls.
Dec. 1	
Pittsburgh at South Florida	Panthers' possible Big East farewell is on the road.

HAKEEM SMITH

Photo by Jim Owens/Icon SMI

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Big East Champion
BCS (National championship game if ranked #1 or #2)

Big East #2	Champs vs. ACC #3
Big East #3	Belk vs. ACC #5
Big East #4	New Era Pinstripe vs. Big 12 #7
Big East #5	BBVA Compass vs. SEC #8 or #9
Big East #6	Beef O'Brady's vs. C-USA #5

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Teddy Bridgewater	QB	So.	Louisville	Size and arm remind many of WVU's Geno Smith.
2. Brandon Coleman	WR	So.	Rutgers	Size (6-6, 220) and speed give him first-round potential.
3. Justin Pugh	OT	Sr.	Syracuse	Three-year starter is projected as a solid future pro.
4. Ray Graham	RB	Sr.	Pittsburgh	Skill set fits the NFL perfectly if knee is OK.
5. Khaseem Greene	LB	Sr.	Rutgers	Led Big East in tackles after switch from safety.
6. Ryan Griffin	TE	Sr.	Connecticut	Proven receiver and an effective run and pass blocker.
7. Ryne Giddens	DE	Jr.	South Florida	Rising junior is Bulls' latest promising pass rusher.
8. Jarred Holley	S	Sr.	Pittsburgh	Four-year starter is undersized but very athletic.
9. Logan Ryan	CB	Jr.	Rutgers	League's top cover corner is also a sure tackler.
10. Jake Smith	OG	So.	Louisville	Frosh All-American started every game at left guard.

By Mike Farrell | Rivals.com

BIG EAST RECRUITING

1. RUTGERS: With the sudden departure of Coach Greg Schiano to the NFL only days before National Signing Day, the remaining staff did an extremely impressive job keeping this class together. On top of that, Rutgers also managed to add top defensive lineman Darius Hamilton, wide receiver Ian Thomas and athlete Jevon Tyree after Coach Schiano left. Overall, the class was dominated by an extremely strong group of offensive linemen, headlined by Chris Muller and J.J. Denman, who both come from Eastern Pennsylvania. And with Hamilton, the Scarlet Knights managed to keep the top player in New Jersey home for the second consecutive year.

2. LOUISVILLE: The Cardinals were once again able to bring in a strong group of prospects from Florida, but the top overall recruit in the class was linebacker Nick Dawson of Charlotte (N.C.) Phillip O'Berry. Paired with Keith Brown of Miami (Fla.) Norland, Louisville managed to sign one of the top linebacker duos in the country. The Cardinals also grabbed two standouts from Georgia in defensive ends Larry Jefferson and Sheldon Rankins. On offense, the Cardinals brought in a deep group of offensive linemen, led by 6-6, 339-pound Abraham Garcia of Florida and a number of dynamic skill players, including running back Brandon Radcliff out of Miami.

3. PITTSBURGH: Pittsburgh fans have become accustomed to the sudden coaching change right before National Signing Day, but they hope the arrival of Paul Chryst from Wisconsin will finally give them some stability. Chryst and his staff did well to keep the class together, especially the offensive trio of running back Rushel Shell, quarterback Chad Voytik and offensive lineman Adam Bisnowaty. The class was then topped off by the addition of top in-state linebacker Deaysean Rippy, who chose the Panthers on National Signing Day over West Virginia and Arizona. Chryst and his staff were able to keep some of the top in-state talent home.

4. SOUTH FLORIDA: Not surprisingly, the Bulls concentrated a majority of their recruiting efforts in-state and managed to keep a few top prospects home. At the top of this list are tight end Sean Price and wide receiver D'Vario Montgomery. Price was an early commitment, but with several top national programs making serious efforts, the staff worked extremely hard to secure his signature on National Signing Day. Montgomery, 6-3, 215 pounds, has all the tools to make an early impact for the Bulls this fall. The Bulls also plugged a few holes by signing six junior college prospects, including running back Michael Pierre and offensive lineman Chandlor Matthews.

5. CINCINNATI: The Bearcats signed a large and deep class in February, headlined by the quarterback duo of Bennie Coney and Trenton Norvell. Both quarterbacks bring good size and athleticism to Cincinnati, where they should have a chance to flourish in the Bearcats open offensive system. Aside from bringing in their fair share of players from the Southeast and obviously Ohio, the Bearcats also hit the Indianapolis area very hard. This included signing four players from Warren Central High School, one of the top programs in the state. Running back Deionte Buckley headlines this group.

6. SYRACUSE: The Orange were lacking big play ability on offense and hope that a few of their new additions will be able to help on that front. Running back George Morris is an explosive all-around back, tight end Ron Thompson has a great deal of potential. Athlete Devante McFarlane is versatile and athletic enough to help out in several facets of the game. Defensively, the Orange got help on the line from the junior college ranks. Defensive end Markus Pierce-Brewster and defensive tackle Zian Jones will both play right away. The top recruit in this class is defensive back Wayne Morgan, a huge in-state get.

7. CONNECTICUT: The 2011 season did not do too much to answer the quarterback concerns at UConn, so the Huskies added two more important pieces to the puzzle. Record-breaking in-state quarterback Casey Cochran was a very important target for the Huskies, and he is joined by junior college quarterback Chandler Whitmer. Also hoping to add some offensive spark will be running back Joseph Williams, who has also been in the program since the spring. Williams is up to 6-0, 200 pounds after spending a few months at the Virginia prep school and he should be ready to compete for playing time.

8. TEMPLE: With the news that the Owls will be playing their 2012 season in the Big East Conference, they should get a recruiting boost in the future. However, without that recruiting ammunition, the coaching staff still did an impressive job piecing together this group of prospects. Of the 29 prospects signed, 25 are from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland, so the staff knows where their strengths lie. On the offensive side of the ball, wide receiver Romond Deloatch of Virginia brings a big-play threat to Philadelphia. Defensively, the addition of defensive back Nate Smith was a nice victory for the coaching staff, as he was originally committed to West Virginia. Smith has proven himself as both a top level cornerback and safety while at the high school level, and should bring that to Temple.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Darius Hamilton	6-4/245	DE	Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep	Rutgers
2.	Rushel Shell	6-0/210	RB	Aliquippa (Pa.) Hopewell	Pittsburgh
3.	Nick Dawson	6-3/228	LB	Charlotte (N.C.) Phillip O Berry	Louisville
4.	Chris Muller	6-6/287	OT	Boyertown (Pa.) Area Senior	Rutgers
5.	Chad Voytik	6-1/183	QB	Cleveland (Tenn.) High	Pittsburgh
6.	Keith Brown	6-1/225	LB	Miami (Fla.) Norland	Louisville
7.	D'Vario Montgomery	6-3/215	WR	Winter Park (Fla.) High	USF
8.	Sean Price	6-4/232	TE	Citra (Fla.) North Marion	USF
9.	Leonte Carroo	6-1/205	WR	Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep	Rutgers
10.	Adam Bisnowaty	6-6/275	OT	Pittsburgh (Pa.) Fox Chapel Area	Pittsburgh
11.	J.J. Denman	6-7/305	OT	Fairless Hills (Pa.) Pennsbury	Rutgers
12.	Deaysean Rippy	6-2/198	LB	McKees Rocks (Pa.) Sto Rox	Pittsburgh
13.	Quanzell Lambert	6-2/230	LB	Sicklerville (N.J.) Timber Creek	Rutgers
14.	Gerod Holliman	6-0/185	CB	New Berlin (N.Y.) Milford Academy	Louisville
15.	Wayne Morgan	5-11/188	CB	Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall Campus	Syracuse
16.	Devontre Parnell	5-11/163	CB	Winnsboro (S.C.) Fairfield Central	Louisville
17.	Chris Bivins	5-11/175	CB	Gainesville (Fla.) High	USF
18.	Steve Longa	6-1/207	LB	Saddle Brook (N.J.) High	Rutgers
19.	Julian Pinnix-Odrick	6-5/260	DE	Montclair (N.J.) High	Rutgers
20.	James Hamilton	6-4/325	DT	Orlando (Fla.) Olympia	USF

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR: DARIUS HAMILTON

Despite all of the coaching turmoil at Rutgers right before Signing Day, the Scarlet Knights were able to land defensive lineman Darius Hamilton. A national top 15 player, he has the potential to make an immediate impact at Rutgers.

TOP SLEEPER: ZACH RUGG

It is never easy for an offensive lineman to make an early impact at the BCS level, but Zach Rugg of Johnstown (Pa.) Bishop McCort has that ability. Proving his impressive athleticism on both the defensive line and on the wrestling mat during his high school career, Rugg has the size, toughness and agility to make his mark at UConn.

LIKELY TO BE BEST NFL PLAYER: RUSHEL SHELL

Ever since his commitment to Pittsburgh, running back Rushel Shell has been drawing comparisons to ex-Panther LeSean McCoy. That will surely continue in the coming years as Shell attempts to make a name for himself at Pittsburgh. Shell has the natural ability to do just that, and as he continues to improve his game, while also getting bigger and stronger, the sky is the limit for him.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP: SEAN PRICE

Being able to hold on to tight end Sean Price may have been the most important victory for the South Florida coaching staff in this class. Price actually committed to the Bulls almost eight months before National Signing Day, but that obviously did not keep other schools from hounding Price until his signature was on his Letter of Intent. The main competitors became Georgia and Oklahoma, but South Florida finished the job and got the No. 2-ranked tight end in Florida.

BIGGEST MISS: DEVIN FULLER

While it is difficult to fault Rutgers for the way they finished their recruiting class after Coach Greg Schiano bolted for the NFL days before National Signing Day, there was one that likely got away. Athlete Devin Fuller was rumored to be a heavy Rutgers lean and seemed set to commit to the Scarlet Knights, however, after Schiano made his move, so did Fuller as he decided to take his talents to UCLA instead.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF: RUTGERS

After Schiano left for the NFL, the remaining coaching staff had to work overtime to keep the impressive class together. What they accomplished was extremely impressive. Since that time, a majority of the coaching staff has joined Schiano in the NFL, but the work they did to maintain this class should not be underestimated.

RANKING

23 LOUISVILLE | CARDINALS

Big East rank: 1 Record: 7-6 Big East record: 5-2 (T-1st) Stadium: Papa John's Cardinal Stadium (55,000)

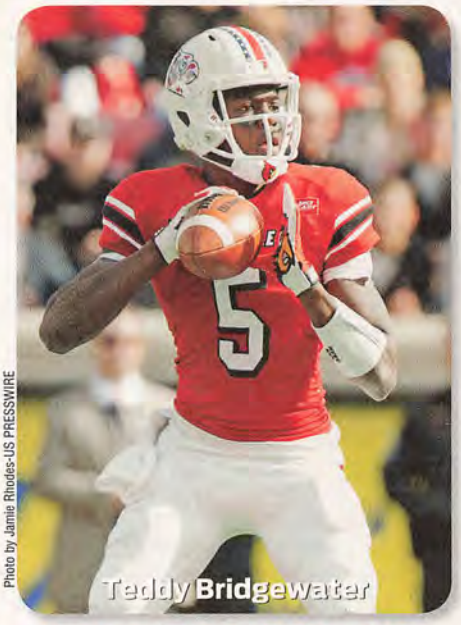

Teddy Bridgewater

Photo by Jamie Rhodes-US PRESSWIRE

"He's been lights out (in the spring). ... As a young player, he didn't quite 'get it.' Now he does, and you're seeing a lot more completions."
— Offensive coordinator Shawn Watson, on QB Teddy Bridgewater

CARDINALS at a GLANCE

COACH: Charlie Strong — At Louisville and overall: 14-12, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shawn Watson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Vance Bedford

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Teddy Bridgewater, RB Dominique Brown, WR DeVante Parker, DE Marcus Smith, LB Preston Brown, CB Adrian Bushell, S Hakeem Smith, S Calvin Pryor

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The youth movement returns for Act II after turning what was supposed to be a rebuilding year into a share of the Big East title. Bridgewater is only getting better after starting 10 games as a true freshman. The defense finally has the personnel to be molded in the fashion that suits Strong.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line needs some depth and has to prove that it can protect Bridgewater, but it should be better after playing three freshmen last season. The Cards' biggest issue might simply be dealing with the weight of high expectations. They are the preseason pick to win the Big East.

OFFENSE

No player benefitted more from being thrown in as a true freshman than quarterback Teddy Bridgewater. He was able to handle so much more mentally in the spring, which will open up the offense, making it that much more unpredictable.

The line returns four starters, but Bridgewater also added about 20 pounds and will be able to absorb more hits.

Bridgewater will have plenty of help, starting in the backfield.

Dominique Brown was at quarterback until the third game of last season, when he had a breakout performance at running back against Kentucky. Senorise Perry was also used at cornerback but converted to running back. Brown is a more imposing runner. Perry is arguably the fastest player on the team.

Sophomore DeVante Parker, who caught six touchdown passes out of 18 overall receptions, is ready to become an every-down receiver. Also at receiver, the talented, but oft injured, Damian Copeland is finally healthy.

DEFENSE

Coach Charlie Strong, who was a longtime defensive coordinator, finally has the personnel with the experience to develop a dominating unit.

The secondary returns all four starters, including strong safety Hakeem Smith, who has started 24 consecutive games. Smith is tied with linebacker Preston Brown as the returning leading tackler (84).

Free safety Calvin Pryor took over in the middle of last season as a true freshman. Cornerbacks Adrian Bushell and Andrew Johnson will allow coordinator Vance Bedford to play more man coverage so he can bring pressure. Cornerback Terell Floyd is essentially a third starter who will be used early on in nickel packages.

Brown moves to the middle to replace Dexter Heyman, who led the team in tackles last season. Brown will have help from Deiontrez Mount, who at 6-5, 243 plays a hybrid outside linebacker/defensive end role.

Anchoring the Cards in the middle of the line will be a rotation of Brandon Dunn, Jamaine Brooks and Roy Philon.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Louisville has to replace kicker Chris Philpott and punter Josh Bleser. Placekicker John Wallace, a redshirt freshman, earned a scholarship out of high school and made good on a 52-yarder during the spring game. Ryan Johnson will take over punting duties.

Adrian Bushell established himself last season as a budding special teams superstar. He had a 100-yard kickoff return for a touchdown, as well as two blocked kicks — one was returned for a score, which helped propel the Cards to a win at West Virginia.

OVERVIEW

After playing 11 true freshmen last season — and each started at least one game — the Cards won't have to rely on any this year. They only have nine seniors, so the majority of starters on offense and defense are still young — but experienced — players. The time is now, though, as the schedule isn't particularly intimidating, and West Virginia's move to the Big 12 leaves the Cards as the clear frontrunner in the league.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Corvin Lamb: The redshirt freshman will finally make his highly anticipated debut. Lamb is only 5-9, but weighs 216 pounds. He combines arguably the best combination of speed and power of all the Cards' backs and will be in the rotation.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**5**	**Teddy Bridgewater***	**6-3**	**208**	**So.**
RB	10	Dominique Brown	6-2	227	Jr.
WR	9	DeVante Parker	6-3	205	So.
WR	82	Eli Rogers	5-10	185	So.
WR	14	Andrell Smith	6-3	210	Sr.
TE	85	Nate Nord	6-5	230	Sr.
LT	**66**	**Alex Kupper***	**6-3**	**296**	**Sr.**
LG	**70**	**John Miller***	**6-2**	**304**	**So.**
C	**55**	**Mario Benavides***	**6-4**	**301**	**Sr.**
RG	**53**	**Jake Smith***	**6-4**	**315**	**So.**
RT	79	Jamon Brown	6-6	340	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	90	B.J. Dubose	6-5	273	So.
DT	99	Jamaine Brooks	6-4	330	So.
DT	**92**	**Brandon Dunn***	**6-3**	**285**	**Jr.**
DE	91	Marcus Smith	6-3	256	Jr.
LB	48	Deiontrez Mount	6-5	243	So.
LB	**2**	**Preston Brown***	**6-2**	**258**	**Jr.**
LB	24	Daniel Brown	6-1	234	Sr.
CB	**15**	**Andrew Johnson***	**5-9**	**187**	**So.**
CB	**21**	**Adrian Bushell***	**5-11**	**184**	**Sr.**
SS	**29**	**Hakeem Smith***	**6-1**	**183**	**Jr.**
FS	**25**	**Calvin Pryor***	**6-2**	**210**	**So.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	45	John Wallace	6-0	180	Fr.
P	38	Ryan Johnson	5-11	175	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	KENTUCKY
Sept. 8	MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 15	NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 22	at FIU
Sept. 29	at Southern Miss
Oct. 13	at Pittsburgh
Oct. 20	SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 26	CINCINNATI
Nov. 3	TEMPLE
Nov. 10	at Syracuse
Nov. 24	CONNECTICUT
Nov. 29	at Rutgers

2011 RESULTS

W	MURRAY STATE	21-9
L	FIU	17-24
W	at Kentucky	24-17
L	MARSHALL	13-17
L	at North Carolina	7-14
L	at Cincinnati	16-25
W	RUTGERS	16-14
W	SYRACUSE	27-10
W	at West Virginia	38-35
L	PITTSBURGH	14-21
W	at Connecticut	34-20
W	at South Florida	34-24
	Belk Bowl	
L	vs. NC State	24-31

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.9	98
Rushing	121.5	93
Passing	211.5	74
Total	333.0	103
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.1	17
Rushing	100.5	10
Pass	227.4	68
Total	327.9	23
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-1	-0.08	67

RANKING

36 RUTGERS | SCARLET KNIGHTS

Big East rank: 2 Record: 9-4 Big East record:4-3 (T-4th) Stadium: Rutgers Stadium (52,454)

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Khaseem Greene

"This could be one of the best defenses to ever play here. Now that I've set the bar that high it's up to us to go out and do it."

— Khaseem Greene

SCARLET KNIGHTS at a GLANCE

COACH: Kyle Flood — At Rutgers and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Brock
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robb Smith

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 8 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Jawan Jamison, WR Brandon Coleman, TE D.C. Jefferson, DT Scott Vallone LB Khaseem Greene, LB Steve Beauharnais, CB Logan Ryan, S Duron Harmon

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: After finishing eighth nationally in scoring defense and 14th in total defense, Rutgers could be even better this year. But developing a consistent pass rush will be the key. There's also depth, talent and a variety of skills at the wide receiver spots.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Same as it has been for three years now — quarterback play and the offensive line. Here's the thing: Rutgers doesn't need Gary Nova or Chas Dodd to win games; they just can't lose them with their play. The offensive line's potential needs to become reality.

OFFENSE

First-year head coach Kyle Flood inherits two familiar problems: Uncertainty at quarterback and the offensive line.

His offensive coordinator, Dave Brock, has stated his preference to go with one quarterback after Chas Dodd (eight starts) and Gary Nova (five) split time last year. But both have been plagued by inconsistency and mistakes.

A revamped line should be significantly better. Kaleb Johnson, a Freshman All-American last year, switches from right tackle to left, with Maryland transfer R.J. Dill, a fifth-year senior, sliding into the right tackle spot. Dill started 30 games for the Terrapins.

The receiving unit once again brims with talent, led by third-year sophomore Brandon Coleman, a 6-6, 220-pound game-changer who averaged 32.5 yards per catch and 51.2 yards for his six touchdowns. Rutgers also returns one of the Big East's best tight ends in D.C. Jefferson.

The running game showed some improvement last year, with Jawan Jamison rushing for 897 yards as a freshman. More of is expected of former heralded recruit Savon Huggins, now a sophomore.

DEFENSE

There is talk about this defense being Rutgers' best since 2006 — and maybe even better than that group. The optimism is well-founded.

The secondary features All-Big East performers in cornerback Logan Ryan and free safety Duron Harmon. Another corner, Brandon Jones, has similar potential. The only newcomer to the unit, strong safety Lorenzo Waters, is viewed as a future star.

But the real strength may be at linebacker, where all three starters and last year's top reserve are back. Khaseem Greene earned Big East Defensive co-Player of the Year honors after recording a league-leading 141 tackles, and middle linebacker Steve Beauharnais is a four-year starter.

Jamal Merrell and promising sophomore Kevin Snyder will man the strong side again.

There's some uncertainty on the defensive line, except at nose tackle, where four-year starter Scott Vallone returns. But it is a deep unit, which will be bolstered by the arrival of ballyhooed recruit Darius Hamilton.

Veterans are being counted on to effectively fill the spots on both sides of Vallone.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior punter Justin Doerner did a solid job last year, averaging 40.3 yards. There's uncertainty at placekicker, but true freshman Kyle Federico, a highly-regarded recruit from Florida, enrolled in January to get an early start on taking over the job.

Jeremy Deering's 31.2-yard average on kickoff returns led the Big East last season.

OVERVIEW

The first month is a daunting one with three road games — including one at Arkansas — but Rutgers' defense should keep this team competitive most Saturdays. The key to making a run at the school's first Big East title will be the play at quarterback and on the offensive line. And, of course, how Flood handles the first head coaching assignment of his career.

TOP NEWCOMER

DL Darius Hamilton: Rated the nation's No. 11 recruit overall by Rivals.com — and No. 1 in New Jersey — the son of former NFL standout Keith Hamilton can fill an immediate need at defensive end.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	15	Gary Nova	6-2	230	So.
RB	**23**	**Jawan Jamison***	**5-8**	**200**	**So.**
FB	46	Michael Burton	6-0	230	So.
WR	17	Brandon Coleman	6-6	220	So.
WR	**81**	**Mark Harrison***	**6-3**	**235**	**Sr.**
TE	**10**	**D.C. Jefferson***	**6-6**	**270**	**Sr.**
LT	**72**	**Kaleb Johnson***	**6-4**	**298**	**So.**
LG	**59**	**David Osei***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
C	55	Betim Bujari	6-4	295	So.
RG	75	Antwan Lowery	6-4	301	Jr.
RT	76	R.J. Dill	6-7	315	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**90**	**Michael Larrow***	**6-4**	**270**	**Jr.**
DT	95	Kenneth Kirksey	6-1	270	So.
DT	**94**	**Scott Vallone***	**6-3**	**275**	**Sr.**
DE	13	Ka'Lial Glaud	6-2	240	Jr.
LB	**20**	**Khaseem Greene***	**6-1**	**235**	**Sr.**
LB	**42**	**Steve Beauharnais***	**6-2**	**235**	**Sr.**
LB	**37**	**Jamal Merrell***	**6-4**	**220**	**Jr.**
CB	25	Brandon Jones	6-1	185	Sr.
CB	**11**	**Logan Ryan***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
SS	21	Lorenzo Waters	6-0	190	So.
FS	**32**	**Duron Harmon***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	1	Kyle Federico	6-0	185	Fr.
P	**97**	**Justin Doerner***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Tulane
Sept. 8	HOWARD
Sept. 13	at South Florida
Sept. 22	at Arkansas
Oct. 6	CONNECTICUT
Oct. 13	SYRACUSE
Oct. 20	at Temple
Oct. 27	KENT STATE
Nov. 10	ARMY
Nov. 17	at Cincinnati
Nov. 24	at Pittsburgh
Nov. 29	LOUISVILLE

2011 RESULTS

W	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL	48-0
L	at North Carolina	22-24
W	OHIO	38-26
W	at Syracuse (OT)	19-16
W	PITTSBURGH	34-10
W	NAVY	21-20
L	at Louisville	14-16
L	WEST VIRGINIA	31-41
W	SOUTH FLORIDA (OT)	20-17
W	at Army	27-12
W	CINCINNATI	20-3
L	at Connecticut	22-40
	Pinstripe Bowl	
W	vs. Iowa State	27-13

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.4	65
Rushing	97.8	112
Passing	241.2	52
Total	339.0	99

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.3	8
Rushing	141.9	51
Pass	172.3	9
Total	314.2	14

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 6	+ 0.46	28

RANKING

44 PITTSBURGH | PANTHERS

Big East rank: 3 | Record: 6-7 | Big East record: 4-3 (T-4th) | Stadium: Heinz Field (65,050)

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

"Not where we want to be by any means, but I think it was a productive spring."

— Coach Paul Chryst

PANTHERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Paul Chryst — At Pitt and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Rudolph
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Huxtable

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 8 offense, 4 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Ray Graham, WR Devin Street, TE Hubie Graham, DT Aaron Donald, LB Dan Mason, SS Ray Vinopal, FS Jarred Holley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Panthers are transitioning from a spread offense to a pro-style offense — and that is a good thing because the team is deep at running back and the line is excellent at run blocking. Defensively, the tackle tandem might be the best in the Big East, and the secondary is extremely deep and versatile.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The passing game should be improved, but Tino Sunseri must play much better than he did a year ago. The pass blocking is suspect and the receivers are mostly pedestrian, so it could be a struggle. The defensive and offensive lines are both extremely thin, and the linebacker group lacks experience.

OFFENSE

New coach Paul Chryst will return Pitt from Todd Graham's spread offense to the pro-style football of the Dave Wannstedt era. Like the two coaches before him, Chryst will use Tino Sunseri at quarterback, a senior entering his third year as the starter.

Sunseri has been a lightning rod for criticism, but he is and has been by far the Panthers' best option. Last year's struggles had a lot more to do with the system than Sunseri. Like more of the players on offense, he will be more comfortable in Chryst's offense.

The line needs to be rebuilt some, but that process was aided greatly when senior left guard Chris Jacobson, who missed most of last season with a knee injury, was granted a sixth year of eligibility. Jacobson and senior center Ryan Turnley will anchor the line.

The Panthers' strength is at running back, where senior Ray Graham, coming back from injury, should push for major awards. He is backed up by talented sophomore Isaac Bennett, and the Panthers also will have highly touted incoming freshman Rushel Shell.

Senior tight end Hubie Graham is an excellent fit in the pro-style offense. The receivers as a whole are versatile, led by junior Devin Street, who matured into a go-to player late last season.

DEFENSE

The defensive line took major graduation hits, which is bad timing as the Panthers are shifting from a three-man to a four-man front.

Still, the tackle position is in great shape as junior Aaron Donald should push for first-team all-conference honors. The end position is a little thin and not very experienced, but sophomores Bryan Murphy and T.J. Clemmings showed some flashes during the spring, and senior Shayne Hale might finally be ready to make an impact.

The linebackers got a boost when junior Dan Mason, who suffered a major knee injury early in 2010 and was thought to be done for his career, was medically cleared. He looked like he hadn't missed a step and will secure the middle.

The Panthers are stacked at safety, and junior K'Waun Williams will be one of the top corners in the Big East. Pitt will play much more man and press coverage than last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior kicker Kevin Harper and junior punter Matt Yoklic are blessed with powerful legs, and they settled in last season as starters.

Harper missed a few field goals early but became almost automatic late; he made 21 of 31 field-goal attempts. He boomed a Heinz Field-record 52-yarder against Cincinnati. Yoklic finished second in the Big East with 41.2 yards per punt.

OVERVIEW

The Panthers seem to have found the right fit in Chryst, the former Wisconsin offensive coordinator. Chryst is a no-frills guy who fits perfectly in this blue-collar city, and the locals appreciate his pro-style philosophy. But the transition may take a year or two as Chryst inherited a roster with an extreme lack of depth along both lines.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Rushel Shell: The incoming freshman was rated the No. 6 running back nationally by Rivals.com after setting the Pennsylvania high school career record with 9,078 yards. He scored 110 touchdowns in his career and set a national mark with 39 consecutive 100-yard games.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	**Tino Sunseri***	6-2	215	Sr.
RB	1	**Ray Graham***	5-9	195	Sr.
WR	5	**Cam Saddler***	5-7	170	Sr.
WR	15	**Devin Street***	6-4	190	Jr.
WR	87	**Mike Shanahan***	6-5	225	Sr.
TE	83	**Hubie Graham***	6-4	230	Sr.
LT	70	Juantez Hollins	6-5	305	Jr.
LG	54	**Chris Jacobson***	6-3	295	Sr.
C	75	**Ryan Turnley***	6-6	320	Sr.
RG	78	Cory King	6-6	325	Jr.
RT	74	Matt Rotheram	6-6	350	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	93	Bryan Murphy	6-3	250	So.
DT	97	**Aaron Donald***	6-0	270	Jr.
DT	95	K.K. Mosley-Smith	6-0	295	So.
DE	45	Shayne Hale	6-4	255	Sr.
LB	44	Shane Gordon	6-1	230	Jr.
LB	40	Dan Mason	6-0	220	Jr.
LB	8	**Todd Thomas***	6-2	220	So.
CB	2	**K'Waun Williams***	5-10	190	Jr.
CB	24	Cullen Christian	6-0	190	Fr.
SS	9	Ray Vinopal	5-10	195	So.
FS	18	**Jarred Holley***	5-10	190	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	39	**Kevin Harper***	5-10	180	Sr.
P	92	**Matt Yoklic***	6-4	205	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	YOUNGSTOWN STATE
Sept. 6	at Cincinnati
Sept. 15	VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 22	at Gardner-Webb
Oct. 5	at Syracuse
Oct. 13	LOUISVILLE
Oct. 20	at Buffalo
Oct. 27	TEMPLE
Nov. 3	at Notre Dame
Nov. 9	at Connecticut
Nov. 24	RUTGERS
Dec. 1	at South Florida

2011 RESULTS

W	BUFFALO	35-16
W	MAINE	35-29
L	at Iowa	27-31
L	NOTRE DAME	12-15
W	SOUTH FLORIDA	44-17
L	at Rutgers	10-34
L	UTAH	14-26
W	CONNECTICUT	35-20
L	CINCINNATI	23-26
W	at Louisville	21-14
L	at West Virginia	20-21
W	SYRACUSE	33-20
	BBVA Compass Bowl	
L	vs. SMU	6-28

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.2	83
Rushing	140.3	74
Passing	209.8	77
Total	350.1	88

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.9	38
Rushing	116.9	21
Pass	233.7	72
Total	350.6	35

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-1	-0.08	67

RANKING

47 CINCINNATI | BEARCATS

Big East rank: 4 Record: 10-3 Big East record: 5-2 (T-1st) Stadium: Nippert Stadium (35,000)

Photo by Jim Owens/Icon SMI

"I feel like it's my time. I put in the work. I have the playbook down pat."
— QB Munchie Legaux

BEARCATS at a GLANCE

COACH: Butch Jones — At Cincinnati: 14-11, 2 years
OVERALL: 41-24, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bajakian
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Jancek

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2009
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Munchie Legaux, RB Jameel Poteat, WR Anthony McClung, WR Kenbrell Thompkins, DE Walter Stewart, DE Dan Giordano, LB Maalik Bomar, SS Drew Frey

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: On defense, the Bearcats are set at the end positions, at weakside linebacker, with Bomar, and at strong safety, with Frey. On offense, McClung could be a budding star at wide receiver, but only if Legaux improves his passing accuracy. Special teams could be an area of strength.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Legaux has not proven he can excel at quarterback over an entire season or conduct the offense at the level of excellence that Zach Collaros did. There is no go-to running back to start the season, and young players have to blossom on offense.

OFFENSE

Cincinnati finished spring practice with the starting quarterback job still officially unclaimed, but junior Munchie Legaux is the likely starter, with the frequently injured Brendon Kay nominally in competition.

Legaux started three games late last season in place of injured Zach Collaros, completing 55 of 116 passes for 749 yards, with five touchdowns and four interceptions.

Legaux must improve his footwork to keep passes from sailing, but he's more athletic than Collaros and a serious threat as a runner. Legaux seemed overwhelmed at times in the games he started, but he appeared more confident and in control during spring practice.

Of immediate concern is finding a replacement for Isaiah Pead, who led the Big East in rushing last year.

Senior George Winn, the primary backup running back last year, is listed with the first team. But the long-term solution more likely will come from two sophomores: Jameel Poteat, who was the jewel of the 2011 recruiting class, and Ralph David Abernathy IV, who made a mark last year as a kick returner. Junior college transfer Aaron Harris could also be a factor.

Converted quarterback Jordan Luallen, effective in open space, is now at slot receiver to take advantage of his athleticism. He will still see spot duty at quarterback in certain formations.

Junior Anthony McClung, who caught 49 passes for 683 yards and six touchdowns last year, returns at wide receiver. The Bearcats are hoping for more production from senior Kenbrell Thompkins.

DEFENSE

John Jancek, who shared coordinator duties last year with Tim Banks (off to Illinois), will now run the defense, promising to maintain the approach that saw the Bearcats rise from last to third in the Big East in scoring defense. They led the league with a plus-12 turnover margin, which helped compensate for a porous pass defense.

Cincinnati lost two of the best defensive players in school history in tackle Derek Wolfe and middle linebacker JK Schaffer.

The leader of the defense will be sixth-year senior strong safety Drew Frey, a first-team All-Big East selection in 2011. Sophomore Solomon Tentman will step into Schaffer's spot at middle linebacker after a long, grueling recovery from a knee injury.

The Bearcats have proven ends in seniors Walter Stewart and Dan Giordano.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Patrick O'Donnell led the Big East last year with a 43.8-yard average. Placekicker Tony Miliano has room to improve after a freshman season in which he missed three extra points and eight field-goal attempts.

Abernathy finished second in the league in kickoff returns with a 26.5-yard average.

OVERVIEW

On paper, this is not a team that should challenge for a Big East title, but the league is down and the Bearcats have proven in recent years that they're capable of overachieving. For that to happen, Legaux will have to make huge strides, and the defense will have to carry a sizeable burden, especially early in the season while the offense searches for its identity.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Nate Cole: The true freshman from Memphis is a speedy downfield threat who will remind Cincinnati fans of ex-Bearcat Armon Binns. Cole (6-0, 177) was rated a three-star recruit and the 62nd-best receiver in the nation by Rivals.com.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	4	Munchie Legaux	6-4	203	Jr.
RB	32	George Winn	5-11	198	Sr.
WR	**6**	**Anthony McClung***	**5-11**	**165**	**Jr.**
WR	**1**	**Kenbrell Thompkins***	**6-1**	**196**	**Sr.**
WR	80	Alex Chisum	6-2	178	So.
TE	**18**	**Travis Kelce***	**6-6**	**255**	**Sr.**
LT	**71**	**Eric Lefeld***	**6-6**	**285**	**So.**
LG	**76**	**Austen Bujnoch***	**6-4**	**274**	**Jr.**
C	63	Dan Sprague	6-3	278	Jr.
RG	75	Kevin Schloemer	6-6	303	So.
RT	**77**	**Sean Hooey***	**6-9**	**298**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**54**	**Walter Stewart***	**6-4**	**248**	**Sr.**
DT	90	Camaron Beard	6-5	278	So.
DT	94	Jordan Stepp	6-1	287	Jr.
DE	**99**	**Dan Giordano***	**6-4**	**261**	**Sr.**
LB	**4**	**Maalik Bomar***	**6-1**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	33	Solomon Tentman	6-2	222	So.
LB	**43**	**Nick Temple***	**5-10**	**215**	**So.**
CB	**11**	**Deven Drane***	**5-10**	**179**	**Jr.**
CB	**21**	**Camerron Cheatham***	**5-9**	**195**	**Sr.**
SS	**26**	**Drew Frey***	**6-3**	**200**	**Sr.**
FS	25	Arryn Chenault	6-0	197	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**14**	**Tony Miliano***	**6-1**	**298**	**So.**
P	**34**	**Pat O'Donnell***	**6-5**	**217**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 6	PITTSBURGH
Sept. 15	DELAWARE STATE
Sept. 29	vs. Virginia Tech (Landover, MD)
Oct. 6	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 13	FORDHAM
Oct. 20	at Toledo
Oct. 26	at Louisville
Nov. 3	SYRACUSE
Nov. 10	at Temple
Nov. 17	RUTGERS
Nov. 23	SOUTH FLORIDA
Dec. 1	at Connecticut

2011 RESULTS

W	AUSTIN PEAY	72-10
L	at Tennessee	23-45
W	AKRON	59-14
W	NC STATE	44-14
W	at Miami (OH)	27-0
W	LOUISVILLE	25-16
W	at South Florida	37-34
W	at Pittsburgh	26-23
L	WEST VIRGINIA	21-24
L	at Rutgers	3-20
W	at Syracuse	30-13
W	CONNECTICUT	35-27
	Liberty Bowl	
W	vs. Vanderbilt	31-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.3	26
Rushing	178.5	36
Passing	207.2	78
Total	385.7	61

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.3	20
Rushing	96.2	6
Pass	261.2	99
Total	357.4	42

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+12	+0.92	9

RANKING

56 CONNECTICUT | HUSKIES

Big East rank: 5 Record: 5-7 Big East record: 3-4 (6th) Stadium: Rentschler Field (40,000)

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Lyle McCombs

"We had a transition period. One year under our belts (with a new coaching staff) is going to be good for us."

— CB Blidi Wreh-Wilson

HUSKIES at a GLANCE

COACH: Paul Pasqualoni — At Connecticut: 5-7, 1 year; **OVERALL:** 140-79-1, 20 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: George DeLeone
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Don Brown

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: 2010, Fiesta
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 5 offense, 9 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Lyle McCombs, TE Ryan Griffin, DE Trevardo Williams, LB Sio Moore, LB Jory Johnson, CB Dwayne Gratz, CB Blidi Wreh-Wilson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: UConn has a returning 1,000-yard rusher, arguably the Big East's best tight end and a defense with nine starters back. McCombs is the latest in a growing line of top tailbacks produced by UConn.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Quarterback is the biggest issue, but at least there are some options with five on the roster. Game-breakers are still in short supply at wide receiver, and the offensive line needs some re-tooling. Defensively, the Huskies need to improve against the pass, a major problem last year.

OFFENSE

Coach Paul Pasqualoni is expected to wait until late into preseason camp before naming a quarterback starter.

The spring returns had junior college transfer Chandler Whitmer holding the advantage over his four competitors — including returning starter Johnny McEntee and true freshman Casey Cochran, a two-time Connecticut High School Player of the Year who enrolled in January.

After UConn finished 84th nationally in passing and 108th in total offense, there is a glaring need for more production at quarterback.

Even if that issue is resolved, there are concerns whether there are enough playmakers at wideout to make a difference. Boston College transfer Shakim Phillips and Mike Smith, who missed all of last season, could be answers.

The offense will again be built around tailback Lyle McCombs, who earned Freshman All-America honors after rushing for 1,151 yards. Veteran guards Adam Masters and Steve Greene anchor a revamped line, with Penn State transfer Alex Mateas expected to take over at center.

All-Big East tight end Ryan Griffin (33 catches) is a major weapon in the offense.

DEFENSE

As good as UConn's run defense was last season (No. 4 nationally), the Huskies' pass defense was just as bad (113th in the country). With nine returning starters — including everyone in the back seven — there's the expectation the Huskies will be vastly improved at the latter.

The recent trend of quality linebacker play is one reason why, with Jory Johnson, Yawin Smallwood and Sio Moore all finishing in the top 10 in the Big East in tackles last season. Moore also had 16 tackles for loss and three interceptions.

The secondary — with three returning senior starters — has the makings of a good one, especially with cornerback Blidi Wreh-Wilson back after being limited to five starts last year due to injuries. Corner Dwayne Gratz and sophomore safety Ty-Meer Brown each had three interceptions last fall.

The push up front comes from Trevardo Williams. The senior finished second nationally in sacks last season with 12.5. Fellow end Jesse Joseph, meanwhile, has 34 career starts. The Huskies are counting on a big year from senior tackle Ryan Wirth.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior Chad Christen or highly-regarded true freshman Bobby Puyol will have the unenviable task of following placekicker Dave Teggart, the leading scorer in school history. The return game is in capable hands with Nick Williams again handling both punts and kickoffs, in addition to his wide receiver duties. Cole Wagner had a solid first season at punter last year.

OVERVIEW

The Huskies were still playing for bowl eligibility in their final game before losing at Cincinnati. Better play at quarterback is the key to almost everything, since this team looks to be set (and solid) defensively. The schedule is reasonable, too. The Huskies could finish in the upper half of a wide-open Big East.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Chandler Whitmer: The junior college transfer was brought in to upgrade the quarterback position and challenge erratic incumbent Johnny McEntee and three other candidates. He showed enough in the spring to be the starter.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	Chandler Whitmer	6-1	191	So.
RB	43	Lyle McCombs*	5-8	166	So.
FB	47	Reuben Frank	6-3	239	So.
WR	8	Shakim Phillips	6-1	200	So.
WR	31	Nick Williams	5-10	184	Sr.
TE	94	Ryan Griffin*	6-6	247	Sr.
LT	77	Jimmy Bennett	6-9	309	Sr.
LG	69	Steve Greene*	6-5	309	Jr.
C	73	Alex Mateas	6-4	295	So.
RG	63	Adam Masters*	6-4	298	Sr.
RT	77	Kevin Friend*	6-6	295	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	48	Trevardo Williams*	6-2	233	Sr.
DT	53	Ryan Wirth	6-3	271	Sr.
DT	59	Shamar Stephen	6-5	317	Jr.
DE	91	Jesse Joseph*	6-3	259	Sr.
LB	28	Jory Johnson*	6-1	227	Sr.
LB	3	Sio Moore*	6-2	229	Sr.
LB	33	Yawin Smallwood*	6-3	235	So.
CB	5	Blidi Wreh-Wilson*	6-2	190	Sr.
CB	7	Dwayne Gratz*	6-0	198	Sr.
SS	16	Byron Jones*	6-1	192	Sr.
FS	15	Ty-Meer Brown*	6-0	193	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	13	Chad Christen	6-1	202	Jr.
P	86	Cole Wagner*	6-2	211	Jr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 8	NC STATE
Sept. 15	at Maryland
Sept. 22	at Western Michigan
Sept. 29	BUFFALO
Oct. 6	at Rutgers
Oct. 13	TEMPLE
Oct. 19	at Syracuse
Nov. 3	at South Florida
Nov. 9	PITTSBURGH
Nov. 24	at Louisville
Dec. 1	CINCINNATI

2011 RESULTS

W	FORDHAM	35-3
L	at Vanderbilt	21-24
L	IOWA STATE	20-24
W	at Buffalo	17-3
L	WESTERN MICHIGAN	31-38
L	at West Virginia	16-43
W	SOUTH FLORIDA	16-10
L	at Pittsburgh	20-35
W	SYRACUSE	28-21
L	LOUISVILLE	20-34
W	RUTGERS	40-22
L	at Cincinnati	27-35

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.3	82
Rushing	118.5	97
Passing	194.7	84
Total	313.2	108

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.3	50
Rushing	85.7	4
Pass	281.0	113
Total	366.7	51

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 8	+ 0.67	20

RANKING

57 SOUTH FLORIDA | BULLS

Big East rank: 6 Record: 5-7 Big East: 1-6 (T-7th) Stadium: Raymond James (65,857)

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

"There's some speed on this team. They're physical, and they can run."
— Coach Skip Holtz

BULLS at a GLANCE

COACH: Skip Holtz — At USF: 13-12, 2 years
OVERALL: 85-62, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Fitch
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Cosh

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: 2010, Meineke Car Care
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB B.J. Daniels, RB Demitris Murray, WR Victor Marc, WR Sterling Griffin, DE Ryne Giddins, LB DeDe Lattimore, LB Sam Barrington, CB Kayvon Webster

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: No question, the heart of the South Florida defense is at linebacker, where three starters return. The pass rush again looks to be a plus. Even though only one starter returns, Holtz likes the depth at corner. The receiving corps should take a big step up with added depth, and the running backs have more big-play potential.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: RB Darrell Scott's decision to enter the NFL Draft cost the Bulls a tough inside runner. Daniels at quarterback is a threat to run or pass, but he has missed games because of injuries in each of the past two seasons, and his backup wasn't determined in the spring. DT Cory Grissom could miss much of fall camp after breaking his ankle in the spring.

OFFENSE

Quarterback B.J. Daniels heads an offense that averaged 183.2 rushing yards and 249.6 passing yards per game. But the Bulls had problems late in games, especially on third down.

Correcting those critical-situation problems could come down to getting better and more consistent play from the wide receivers.

Junior Sterling Griffin, whose shoulder injury cost him nearly half the 2011 season, and speedy senior Victor Marc are the only returning starters at wideout. But sophomores Andre Davis, who had three starts in 2011, and Ruben Gonzalez both had outstanding springs. Davis had a strong finish to his true freshman year, making 13 of his 22 receptions over the last four games.

Junior Terrence Mitchell, a special-teams demon whose 2011 season was cut short by concussion issues, also should figure more prominently in the passing game.

The Bulls lose leading rusher Darrell Scott, who powered his way to 814 yards in 11 games, but still look solid at running back. Demetris Murray, who started five games on his way to 503 rushing yards in 2011, is the likely starter. He will be pushed by senior Lindsey Lamar and junior Marcus Shaw.

Lamar, who played wide receiver last year, has the breakaway speed the Bulls' backs lacked last year.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Chris Cosh, who spent the past three years at Kansas State, will have seven returning starters, including all three linebackers. Seniors Sam Barrington and Michael Lanaris, and junior DeDe Lattimore, combined for 253 tackles, including 24 for loss and 10.5 sacks.

With defensive end Ryne Giddins (11 tackles for loss, 5.5 sacks), the Bulls have the potential to again be a force in harassing quarterbacks. The Bulls' average of 3.2 sacks a game ranked fourth in the country.

Veteran tackle Cory Grissom broke his ankle in the spring but is expected to be ready for the opener, and sophomore Elkino Watson played in all 12 games up front as a freshman.

Cornerback Kayvon Webster and strong safety Jon Lejiste are the only returning starters in the secondary. Junior college transfers Fidel Montgomery and Joshua Brown look to fill one of the corner spots, and junior JaQuez Jenkins has considerable experience as well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Maikon Bonani has made 40 of 53 field-goal attempts in three years and is unchallenged going into fall camp.

Punter Justin Brockhaus-Kann struggled last year, averaging less than 38 yards an attempt. Redshirt freshman Mattias Ciabatti was No. 1 coming out of the spring. The three-way competition with sophomore Chris Veron will continue in the fall.

OVERVIEW

The Bulls weren't all that far from a bowl trip last year, losing four games by three points each and another by six points. If their receivers come through, they should have a productive year on offense, and the veteran defense should have new life under Cosh. If they stay healthy, the Bulls can compete in the Big East.

TOP NEWCOMER

CB Fidel Montgomery: A junior college transfer from Southwest Mississippi CC, Montgomery came out of the spring No. 1 on the depth chart and will try to lock down one of the two vacancies in the secondary in the fall. He also has experience in returning kickoffs.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**7**	**B.J. Daniels***	**6-0**	**215**	**Sr.**
RB	21	Demetris Murray	6-0	224	Sr.
WR	**17**	**Sterling Griffin***	**6-0**	**194**	**Jr.**
WR	85	Ruben Gonzalez	6-3	197	So.
WR	**15**	**Victor Marc***	**5-11**	**220**	**Sr.**
TE	**9**	**Evan Landi***	**6-3**	**227**	**Sr.**
LT	**74**	**Mark Popek***	**6-7**	**296**	**Sr.**
LG	65	Lawrence Martin	6-3	309	Jr.
C	78	Austin Reiter	6-3	278	So.
RG	**60**	**Danous Estenor***	**6-3**	**304**	**Sr.**
RT	**70**	**Quinterrius Eatmon***	**6-6**	**313**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**97**	**Ryne Giddins***	**6-3**	**263**	**Jr.**
DT	53	Elkino Watson	6-2	287	So.
DT	**46**	**Cory Grissom***	**6-2**	**316**	**Sr.**
DE	54	Julius Forte	6-2	255	Jr.
LB	**36**	**Sam Barrington***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**55**	**Michael Lanaris***	**6-0**	**234**	**Sr.**
LB	**34**	**DeDe Lattimore***	**6-1**	**238**	**Jr.**
CB	**6**	**Kayvon Webster***	**5-11**	**192**	**Sr.**
CB	14	Fidel Montgomery	6-0	186	Jr.
SS	**8**	**Jon Lejiste***	**6-0**	**212**	**Sr.**
FS	26	Mark Joyce	5-10	200	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**28**	**Maikon Bonani***	**5-10**	**175**	**Sr.**
P	49	Mattias Ciabatti	6-0	183	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	CHATTANOOGA
Sept. 8	at Nevada
Sept. 15	RUTGERS
Sept. 22	at Ball State
Sept. 29	FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 6	at Temple
Oct. 20	at Louisville
Oct. 27	SYRACUSE
Nov. 3	CONNECTICUT
Nov. 17	at Miami
Nov. 23	at Cincinnati
Dec. 1	PITTSBURGH

2011 RESULTS

W	at Notre Dame	23-20
W	BALL STATE	37-7
W	FLORIDA A&M	70-17
W	UTEP	52-24
L	at Pittsburgh	17-44
L	at Connecticut	10-16
L	CINCINNATI	34-37
L	at Rutgers (OT)	17-20
W	at Syracuse	37-17
L	MIAMI	3-6
L	LOUISVILLE	24-34
L	WEST VIRGINIA	27-30

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.3	48
Rushing	183.2	31
Passing	249.6	42
Total	432.8	30
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.7	37
Rushing	107.3	15
Pass	244.0	83
Total	351.3	39
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.17	T-42

RANKING

75 SYRACUSE | ORANGE

Big East rank: 7 | Record: 5-7 | Big East record: 1-6 (T-7th) | Stadium: Carrier Dome (49,262)

Photo by Stephen Dunn/Getty Images

"The program is not going to hide just because we went 5-7."
— Coach Doug Marrone

ORANGE at a GLANCE

COACH: Doug Marrone — At Syracuse and overall: 17-20, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nathaniel Hackett
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scott Shafer

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010, Pinstripe
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 5 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ryan Nassib, OT Justin Pugh, WR Alec Lemon, LB Marquis Spruill, LB Dyshawn Davis, CB Keon Lyn, SS Shamarko Thomas

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense should be better than last year, as long as Spruill is ready in time following spring surgery. His return gives the Orange an active linebacking trio. Nassib has made major strides and has dependable wideouts to count on in Lemon and Marcus Sales.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There's no proven running game and a severe shortage of offensive playmakers, which means scoring will be an issue again. On defense, the Orange needs to develop more of a pass rush and desperately needs Spruill healthy in the middle. The schedule isn't conducive to a winning season, either.

OFFENSE

Even with 1,000-yard rusher Antwon Bailey and All-Big East tight end Nick Provo last year, Syracuse still finished 84th nationally in scoring.

Without them? Expect the Orange to struggle mightily again — unless senior quarterback Ryan Nassib has a huge season.

Nassib threw for 2,685 yards and 22 touchdowns last year, but points were still tough to come by. He has the benefit of three returning starters on the offensive line, including All-Big East left tackle Justin Pugh, but there's a shortage of playmakers.

Wide receiver Alec Lemon set a school record with 68 catches (for 834 yards), but he's a possession receiver. The Orange's two best hopes for offensive threats are players who weren't on the roster last year.

One is wide receiver Marcus Sales, who was suspended last year after averaging 15.9 yards per catch in 2010. The other is heralded freshman recruit Ashton Broyld, who can fill in at almost any skill position on offense.

Jerome Smith, who rushed for 134 yards a year ago, is being counted on as the tailback workhorse.

DEFENSE

The Big East's worst defense in 2011 figured to be better this fall with eight returning starters until a spring injury suffered by middle linebacker Marquis Spruill, a second-team All-Big East selection last year.

Spruill had surgery to repair what the school termed a lower body injury; his status for the season won't be known until preseason camp. That's a blow to a back seven that figured to be the unit's strength.

Linebacker Dan Vaughan, second on the team in tackles a year ago with 72, will have to pick up the slack until Spruill returns.

Senior strong safety Shamarko Thomas (third on the team in tackles despite missing two games) and cornerback Keon Lyn are the mainstays in a secondary that was roughed up in 2011, allowing 258.3 passing yards per game.

Syracuse hopes defensive improvement will result from more active play from returning starting linemen Jay Bromley and Deon Goggins. The Orange's 28 sacks last year were the fewest in the Big East.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Orange need to show dramatic improvement in punt returns and net punting, with both units among the nation's worst last year.

Placekicker Ross Krautman has limited range (a long of 40 yards last season) but is accurate (he made 15 of 19 field-goal attempts). Jonathan Fisher handled the punting duties in nine games as a freshman last year.

OVERVIEW

The schedule-maker didn't do coach Doug Marrone any favors with a non-conference slate that features Northwestern, Missouri and USC. But there's enough defensive talent — if Spruill is healthy — to believe that the Orange doesn't have to finish last in the Big East for the seventh time in eight years.

A .500 record looks to be the best-case scenario as Marrone tries to wring as much production as possible from a talent-challenged offense.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB/RB Ashton Broyld: A dynamic playmaker, Broyld enrolled in January and immediately worked at both quarterback and running back during the spring. The 6-4, 229-pounder is exactly what this bland offense needs.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	**Ryan Nassib***	6-2	229	Sr.
RB	45	Jerome Smith	5-11	213	Jr.
FB	26	Myles Davis	6-2	233	Jr.
WR	5	Marcus Sales	6-0	183	Sr.
WR	15	**Alec Lemon***	6-2	202	Sr.
TE	85	Beckett Wales	6-3	253	Jr.
LT	67	**Justin Pugh***	6-6	292	Sr.
LG	75	**Zack Chibane***	6-5	293	Sr.
C	59	**Macky MacPherson***	6-2	269	Jr.
RG	77	Lou Alexander	6-4	331	Sr.
RT	60	Sean Hickey	6-6	282	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	91	Brandon Sharpe	6-2	245	Sr.
DT	96	**Jay Bromley***	6-3	280	Jr.
DT	51	Eric Crume	6-0	332	So.
DE	13	**Deon Goggins***	6-1	272	Sr.
LB	33	**Dan Vaughan***	6-2	219	Sr.
LB	11	**Marquis Spruill***	6-1	216	Jr.
LB	35	**Dyshawn Davis***	6-3	215	So.
CB	8	**Keon Lyn***	6-1	190	Jr.
CB	9	**RI'Shard Anderson***	6-1	189	Sr.
SS	21	**Shamarko Thomas***	5-10	208	Sr.
FS	28	Jeremi Wilkes	5-9	189	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	37	**Ross Krautman***	5-7	155	Jr.
P	46	**Jonathan Fisher***	6-1	209	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 8	vs. USC (East Rutherford, N.J.)
Sept. 15	STONY BROOK
Sept. 22	at Minnesota
Oct. 5	PITTSBURGH
Oct. 13	at Rutgers
Oct. 19	CONNECTICUT
Oct. 27	at South Florida
Nov. 3	at Cincinnati
Nov. 10	LOUISVILLE
Nov. 17	at Missouri
Nov. 23	at Temple

2011 RESULTS

W	WAKE FOREST (OT)	36-29
W	RHODE ISLAND	21-14
L	at USC	17-38
W	TOLEDO	33-30
L	RUTGERS (OT)	16-19
W	at Tulane	37-34
W	WEST VIRGINIA	49-23
L	at Louisville	10-27
L	at Connecticut	21-28
L	SOUTH FLORIDA	17-37
L	CINCINNATI	13-30
L	at Pittsburgh	20-33

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.2	84
Rushing	120.4	95
Passing	227.8	65
Total	348.2	90
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.5	73
Rushing	128.2	32
Pass	258.3	98
Total	386.4	64
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.17	42

RANKING

106 TEMPLE | OWLS

Big East rank: 8 Record: 9-4 MAC record: 5-3 (2nd, East) Stadium: Lincoln Financial Field (68,532)

Photo by Frank DiBrango

Matt Brown

"Obviously, you continue to raise the bar and that's a challenge, but that's what we're building for."
— Coach Steve Addazio

OWLS at a GLANCE

COACH: Steve Addazio — At Temple and overall: 9-4, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Day
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chuck Heater

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1967, Middle Atlantic — University Division
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 4 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Chris Coyer, RB Matt Brown, OT Martin Wallace, NT Levi Brown, DL John Youboty, SS Justin Gildea, K/P Brandon McManus

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Coyer fits the college trend as a dual-threat quarterback. Brown — if his 165-pound body holds up — is a dynamic playmaker who is also a dangerous punt and kickoff returner. The defensive line, secondary and kicking game appears as if they will be solid.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There's the uncertainty over how quickly the offensive line will come together — and how effective it can be. Proven wide receivers are in short supply, too, as well at tight end. The Owls need to develop defensive playmakers, especially at linebacker.

OFFENSE

Temple has found stability — finally — and will try to rebuild its offense after three quarterbacks and two tailbacks split time a year ago.

Chris Coyer, who became the starting quarterback late last fall, will have the offense to himself after throwing for 463 yards and rushing for 562 — and because of the decision by Mike Gerardi not to return for his senior year.

The rugged Coyer (6-3, 230) rushed for 184 yards on 17 carries against Ohio.

Diminutive Matt Brown, meanwhile, is in line for an even bigger workload at tailback with the departure of Bernard Pierce (1,481 yards, 27 touchdowns). Brown, who also excels on punt and kickoff returns, rushed for 916 yards on 155 carries.

Beyond those two, Temple has far more questions than answers on offense, with right tackle Martin Wallace being the only returning starter on the line.

Deon Miller is the leading returning receiver (18 catches for 253 yards) on a unit that loses three players who combined for 84 of the team's 116 receptions.

DEFENSE

With the top four tacklers gone from a defense that finished No. 3 nationally in scoring and No. 12 overall, there's a need for bit players in 2011 to take on leading roles.

The secondary should be solid, led by strong safety Justin Gildea (51 tackles and three interceptions last year) and cornerbacks Zamel Johnson and Maurice Jones.

Will linebacker Blaze Caponegro, after breaking into the starting lineup as a sophomore, is the unit's leader now, though Ahkeem Smith saw extensive action last season. Smith will switch to the strong side after sharing time with Caponegro. Junior Olaniyi Adewole will be counted on in the middle.

The defensive line has the ingredients for being formidable, led by returning nose tackle starter Levi Brown and defensive end John Youboty.

Six of the eight players on the defensive line two-deep are back, with Marcus Green getting the chance to take over at the other end spot and junior tackles Kamal Johnson and Shahid Paulhill again splitting time at tackle.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Two names are all you need to know here: Brandon McManus and Brown.

McManus is a superb punter (45.8-yard average) and reliable placekicker (16 of 22 on field-goal attempts and 50-for-50 on PATs last year) who also handles kickoffs. Brown averaged 25.1 yards on kickoff returns (with a 100-yard score) and a solid 10.1 yards on punt returns.

OVERVIEW

Temple officials will tell you there is no such thing as bad timing to be back in the Big East. But the reality is the school's return to the league comes during a transition year.

The Owls, with questions and inexperience on both sides of the ball, will struggle to break even this season. The Big East isn't a daunting league, but it's better than the MAC, as the Owls will find out.

TOP NEWCOMER

OT Zach Hooks: On a rebuilt offensive line featuring four new starters, the Owls think enough of the redshirt freshman that he's listed as the starter at left tackle. He'll be thrown into the fire immediately.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	**Chris Coyer***	6-3	230	Jr.
RB	22	**Matt Brown***	5-5	165	Sr.
FB	44	Wyatt Benson	6-0	228	Jr.
WR	86	**Deon Miller***	6-5	210	Jr.
WR	84	Malcolm Eugene	6-4	205	So.
TE	38	Cody Booth	6-5	250	Jr.
LT	54	Zach Hooks	6-6	280	Fr.
LG	50	Jeff Whittingham	6-2	305	Jr.
C	78	Sean Boyle	6-5	300	Sr.
RG	59	Jamien Newman	6-4	290	So.
RT	73	**Martin Wallace***	6-6	300	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	41	Marcus Green	6-1	240	Sr.
DT	93	Kamal Johnson	6-4	295	Jr.
NT	99	**Levi Brown***	6-2	300	Jr.
DE	11	**John Youboty***	6-4	250	Sr.
LB	33	**Blaze Caponegro***	6-1	218	Jr.
LB	56	Olaniyi Adewole	6-2	228	Jr.
LB	24	Ahkeem Smith	6-0	215	Sr.
CB	6	Maurice Jones	5-10	195	Sr.
CB	27	**Zamel Johnson***	6-0	170	Jr.
SS	4	**Justin Gildea***	5-11	190	Sr.
FS	14	Vaughn Carraway	6-2	192	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	19	**Brandon McManus***	6-3	190	Sr.
P	19	**Brandon McManus***	6-3	190	Sr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	VILLANOVA
Sept. 8	MARYLAND
Sept. 22	at Penn State
Oct. 6	SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 13	at Connecticut
Oct. 20	RUTGERS
Oct. 27	at Pittsburgh
Nov. 3	at Louisville
Nov. 10	CINCINNATI
Nov. 17	at Army
Nov. 23	SYRACUSE

2011 RESULTS

W	VILLANOVA	42-7
W	at Akron	41-3
L	PENN STATE	10-14
W	at Maryland	38-7
L	TOLEDO	13-36
W	at Ball State	42-0
W	BUFFALO	34-0
L	at Bowling Green	10-13
L	at Ohio	31-35
W	MIAMI (OH)	24-21
W	ARMY	42-14
W	KENT STATE	34-16
	New Mexico Bowl	
W	vs. Wyoming	37-15

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.6	39
Rushing	256.7	7
Passing	126.8	116
Total	383.5	63
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	13.9	3
Rushing	123.9	27
Passing	187.9	15
Total	311.8	12
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+9	+0.69	17

PICKING **THE MOUNTAIN WEST**

After Boise State missed out in '11, MW title should be a lock

So many changes await the Mountain West's 14th season that UNLV's third-year coach Bobby Hauck only half-joked about qualifying as the dean of the league's coaches.

Four new head coaches joined the league. Newcomers Hawaii, Fresno State and Nevada reunite with their historical WAC brethren. TCU is gone. Cornerstones BYU and Utah are long gone.

Even the name changed. "Conference" was dropped from the Mountain West in a logo rebranding last year.

The coach with the longest actual tenure at his current school — that would be Air Force's sixth-year man Troy Calhoun — said, "Any time you're involved with new teams you find out they are pretty intriguing. ... It keeps you extremely alert."

Everybody is on alert about Boise State, the favorite to take the hardware on the way out the door, even while reloading.

"I think there's a lot of assuming going on because of all the things we've earned in the past, but so many of those guys aren't here anymore," Broncos coach Chris Petersen said. "We've never got caught up in outside expectations, good or bad."

Boise State produced a school-record five NFL draft picks, including two first-round selections.

No matter. The Broncos are still favored. Behind them, the field appears to be wide open, with plenty of teams capable of rising up for a challenge into that No. 2 spot.

"This is the most competitive throughout the schedule as it has been," Hauck said.

Part of the mystery going into this fall is a rebuilding year in terms of individual stars.

Besides graduation and the departure of TCU, San Diego State's 1,710-yard rusher Ronnie Hillman left school early and will be taking handoffs from Peyton Manning with the Denver Broncos. New schemes by new coaches sent top receivers packing at New Mexico and Fresno State. Colorado State lost the Mountain West sack leader and another player to disorderly conduct charges.

In place of the league's former stars, young talent at quarterback — junior Derek Carr (Fresno State) and dual-threat sophomores Brett Smith (Wyoming) and Cody Fajardo (Nevada) give those teams a slight edge.

If nothing else, the start of fall drills will return the focus to the field, instead of the latest speculation of future conference membership.

"I only worry about the things I have control over," said Wyoming's Dave Christensen. "Whoever is in the league, we'll show up and play them."

— Natalie Meisler

Mountain West Conference Picks

	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Boise State	Broncos have gone 157-33 in the past 15 years; Chris Petersen is still coaching in Boise.	It's a rebuilding year by any measure. QB Kellen Moore, RB Doug Martin aren't easily replaced.	Broncos still good enough to collect a Mountain West trophy before moving on to Big East.
2. Fresno State	Bulldogs have, by far, the league's best run/pass personnel in QB Derek Carr and RB Robbie Rouse.	First team All-WAC WR Jalen Saunders decided to transfer in the spring.	Bulldogs can contend from the get-go if they can master the spread under new coach Tim DeRuyter.
3. Wyoming	MW Freshman of the Year QB Brett Smith plays like a seasoned veteran.	Question marks in the running game abound with premature departure of RB Alvester Alexander.	Helped by coaching continuity, Wyoming is aiming for its most successful season since the mid-90s.
4. San Diego State	Plenty of offensive talent in the pipeline; defense taking to Rocky Long's scheme.	QB Ryan Lindley and RB Ronnie Hillman are gone; that's 4,864 yards of total offense.	The Big East-bound Aztecs will be building toward their new conference digs.
5. Nevada	Sophomore QB Cody Fajardo will operate Chris Ault's Pistol offense with high efficiency.	The Wolf Pack lost 1,615 yards of rushing. Defense was inconsistent a year ago.	Nevada's offense will cause preparation headaches, but the defense needs some improvement.
6. Air Force	Five straight bowl appearances and two straight Commander-in-Chief trophies.	Four-year starting QB Tim Jefferson is gone. So, too, is 1,100-yard rusher Asher Clark.	Air Force springs some of its best seasons when the least is expected. This could be one of those years.
7. Hawaii	Hawaii favorite son Norm Chow draws his first head coaching assignment at age 66.	QB Bryant Moniz is gone, and personnel has to adjust to new offense.	The state of Hawaii never lacks for talent; it's only a question of how soon the players make the transition.
8. Colorado State	RB Chris Nwoke headlines a team that has new energy with a coaching change.	Top two returning defensive players were suspended in spring ball for off-the-field incidents.	Ex-Alabama offensive coordinator Jim McElwain is the right man to revive the program.
9. UNLV	Solid running game behind veteran offensive line and a frontloaded home schedule.	The Rebels were lousy on offense last season; QB race won't be decided until the fall.	Some glimmers of hope as Bobby Hauck enters his third season, but long way to go.
10. New Mexico	Bob Davie is determined to resurrect the program from the wreckage of three one-win seasons.	Lobos ranked last nationally in scoring and next-to-last in scoring defense.	Davie, UNM start all over again. A Pistol offense might at least be fun to watch.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-MWC Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM			
QB	Derek Carr	Jr.	Fresno State
RB	Robbie Rouse	Sr.	Fresno State
RB	Chris Nwoke	Jr.	Colorado State
WR	Billy Ray Stutzmann	Jr.	Hawaii
WR	Matt Miller	So.	Boise State
TE	Gavin Escobar	Jr.	San Diego State
C	Weston Richburg	Jr.	Colorado State
OL	Nik Embernate	Sr.	San Diego State
OL	Chris Barker	Sr.	Nevada
OL	Nick Carlson	Sr.	Wyoming
OL	Brett Boyko	So.	UNLV
AP	Colin Lockett	Jr.	San Diego State
PK	Parker Herrington	Sr.	Air Force
DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM			
DL	Paipai Falematu	Sr.	Hawaii
DL	Mike Purcell	Sr.	Wyoming
DL	Joseph Harris	Sr.	New Mexico
DL	Reggie Ellis	Sr.	New Mexico
LB	Alex Means	Sr.	Air Force
LB	Travis Brown	Sr.	Fresno State
LB	Art Laurel	Jr.	Hawaii
DB	Leon McFadden	Sr.	San Diego State
DB	Luke Ruff	Sr.	Wyoming
DB	Mike Edwards	Jr.	Hawaii
DB	Blair Burns	So.	Wyoming
P	Pete Kontodiakos	Sr.	Colorado State
OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM			
QB	Brett Smith	So.	Wyoming
RB	D.J. Harper	Sr.	Boise State
RB	Tim Cornett	Jr.	UNLV
WR	Jeremiah Ostrowski	Sr.	Hawaii
WR	Chris McNeill	Sr.	Wyoming
TE	Crockett Gillmore	Jr.	Colorado State
C	Alec Johnson	Sr.	San Diego State
OL	Jeffrey Nady	Sr.	Nevada
OL	Jason Kons	Sr.	Air Force
OL	Joe Kellogg	Sr.	Boise State
OL	Tyler Strong	Jr.	Wyoming
AP	Marcus Sullivan	So.	UNLV
PK	Nolan Kohorst	Jr.	UNLV
DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM			
DL	Jack Reynoso	Jr.	Nevada
DL	Ben Durbin	Sr.	Wyoming
DL	Albert Rosette	Sr.	Nevada
LB	Shaquil Barrett	Jr.	Colorado State
LB	John Lotulelei	Sr.	UNLV
LB	Korey Jones	Sr.	Wyoming
LB	J.C. Percy	Sr.	Boise State
DB	Duke Williams	Sr.	Nevada
DB	Marqueston Huff	Jr.	Wyoming
DB	Sidney Hodge	Jr.	UNLV
DB	Nat Berhe	Jr.	San Diego State
P	Chase Lansford	Sr.	UNLV

THE BIG ONES

Aug. 31	Boise State at Michigan State
Sept. 1	Hawaii at USC
Sept. 1	San Diego State at Washington
Sept. 8	Air Force at Michigan
Sept. 22	BYU at Boise State
Sept. 29	San Diego State at Fresno State
Sept. 29	Hawaii at BYU
Oct. 6	Navy at Air Force
Oct. 6	Fresno State at Colorado State
Oct. 13	Fresno State at Boise State
Oct. 13	Nevada at UNLV
Nov. 3	San Diego State at Boise State
Nov. 3	Colorado State at Wyoming
Nov. 24	Boise State at Nevada
Nov. 24	San Diego State at Wyoming

BOWL CONNECTIONS

MWC Champion
Maaco Las Vegas vs. PAC-12

MWC #2
Poinsettia Bowl vs. BYU
(if qualified)

MWC #3
Independence Bowl vs. ACC

MWC #4
New Mexico Bowl vs. Pac-12

MWC #5
Hawaii Bowl vs. C-USA

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Derek Carr	QB	Jr.	Fresno State	"Kid brother" might be better than David, the former top draft pick.
2. Ryan Katz	QB	Sr.	San Diego State	Oregon State transfer remains on the radar.
3. Gavin Escobar	TE	Jr.	San Diego State	Ideal (6-6, 245) size, catching skills.
4. Weston Richburg	C	Jr.	Colorado State	Ranks among best centers for 2014 NFL Draft.
5. Jeffrey Nady	OT	Sr.	Nevada	Projected No. 7 by NFLDraftScout.com among senior OTs.
6. Chris Barker	OG	Sr.	Nevada	Another impact lineman.
7. Robbie Rouse	RB	Sr.	Fresno State	Hard to ignore 1,549 yards last year, but only 5-7.
8. Luke Ruff	SS	Sr.	Wyoming	Undersized at 5-11 but can contribute on special teams.
9. Crockett Gillmore	TE	Jr.	Colorado State	Physical specimen is still learning the position.
10. Brice Butler	WR	Sr.	San Diego State	USC transfer could make impact if he recovers from shoulder injury.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Derek Carr QB, Fresno State	Robbie Rouse RB, Fresno State	Leon McFadden DB, San Diego State	Ryan Katz QB, San Diego State

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Derek Carr	Fresno State
Strongest Arm	Derek Carr	Fresno State
Best Scrambler	Cody Fajardo	Nevada
Coolest in the Clutch	Brett Smith	Wyoming
Toughest to Bring Down	Chris Nwoke	Colorado State
Best Hands	Matt Miller	Boise State
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Colin Lockett	San Diego State
Best Pass Blocker	Brett Boyko	UNLV
Best Run Blocker	Weston Richburg	Colorado State
Best Pass Rusher	Alex Means	Air Force
Best Cover Corner	Leon McFadden	San Diego State
Special Teams Demon	Luke Ruff	Wyoming

RANKING

24 BOISE STATE | BRONCOS

MWC rank: 1 | Record: 12-1 | MWC record: 6-1 (2nd) | Stadium: Bronco Stadium (32,000)

Photo by Otto Kitsinger III

"We really don't expect a big drop-off. We just don't. ... When you really set standards like that, it's amazing how kids meet and exceed what you're expecting."
— Coach Chris Petersen

BRONCOS at a GLANCE

COACH: Chris Petersen — At Boise State and overall: 73-6, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robert Prince
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Kwiatkowski

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010, WAC co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 7 offense, 2 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB D.J. Harper, WR Matt Miller, WR Mitch Burroughs, WR Kirby Moore, TE Gabe Linehan, OT Charles Leno Jr., OG Joe Kellogg, C Cory Yriarte

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Broncos have 26 seniors, which will help them handle the overhaul to the starting lineups. Nine offensive linemen have started games, the wide receiver corps is deep and experienced, and the secondary could be outstanding. Talent at quarterback is impressive, although inexperienced.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Nobody knows exactly how the loss of quarterback Kellen Moore will affect the offense — it could be a serious issue. The tailback and linebacker depth is scary thin, and the defensive line has six unknowns in the rotation. The kicking situation was a mess last year and is still unresolved.

OFFENSE

Wide receivers coach Robert Prince becomes the third offensive coordinator in as many years for head coach Chris Petersen. Prince inherits an offense that has experience and depth on the offensive line and at wide receiver but needs a quarterback to emerge.

Four players are competing for the quarterback job with junior Joe Southwick, the two-year backup, as the favorite to replace Kellen Moore. Early-arriving true freshman Nick Patti impressed in the spring and could be a factor.

The offensive line returns nine players with starting experience. Junior right tackle Charles Leno Jr. could be the program's next standout tackle.

The wide receiver corps returns sophomore Matt Miller, who tied for the team lead with 62 catches, and five other significant contributors. The tight end crew is young, but junior Gabe Linehan caught five touchdown passes last year.

The backfield features senior D.J. Harper, a big-play tailback getting his first starring role, and senior Dan Paul at fullback.

DEFENSE

Seniors Jamar Taylor and Jerrell Gavins give the Broncos one of the best cornerback tandems in the nation — bolstering an otherwise-inexperienced defense. Taylor enters his third year as a starter. Gavins led the team with three interceptions last season — done in just three games, before sustaining a season-ending knee injury in practice.

The only other returning starter is senior weak-side linebacker J.C. Percy. Senior Tommy Smith and sophomore Blake Renaud should handle the chores in the middle, but the linebacker depth stops there.

Three players with game experience return at the nickel spot. At safety, sophomores Lee Hightower and Jeremy Ioane could be a fearsome tandem.

The line is the major question mark. Tackles Michael Atkinson and Ricky Tjong-A-Tjoe played extensively as backups last year, but the rest of the linemen have very little experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Broncos spent all of last season trying to find someone who could consistently make kicks — and never found him. They missed eight PATs and didn't hit a field goal longer than 32 yards.

Sophomore Dan Goodale and senior Michael Frisina return, and they're joined by redshirt freshman Jake Van Ginkel and true freshman Sean Wale. If spring ball is any indication, it might be another frustrating year.

Junior kickoff specialist Trevor Harman is expected to handle the punting duties.

OVERVIEW

The last three times that Boise State used a first-year starting quarterback, the Broncos went a combined 33-2 in the regular season — so don't expect a huge drop-off. Still, the road schedule will be a challenge for a team that lost so many multi-year starters.

If the Broncos can win the opener at Michigan State, they'll be in position to make another run at an undefeated season because they won't have another road challenge for a month. If they lose to the Spartans, the season could be a march toward the Mountain West title.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Demarcus Lawrence: The junior college transfer, who chose Boise State over Tennessee, Kansas State, South Florida and Mississippi, was a force in the spring game. He will compete with redshirt freshman Sam Ukwuachu at the end/outside linebacker position.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	16	Joe Southwick	6-1	191	Jr.
TB	7	D.J. Harper	5-9	201	Sr.
FB	**47**	**Dan Paul***	**6-0**	**251**	**Sr.**
WR	**2**	**Matt Miller***	**6-3**	**213**	**So.**
WR	**20**	**Mitch Burroughs***	**5-9**	**186**	**Sr.**
TE	87	Gabe Linehan	6-3	240	Jr.
LT	75	Faraji Wright	6-3	275	Sr.
LG	**61**	**Joe Kellogg***	**6-2**	**303**	**Sr.**
C	**74**	**Cory Yriarte***	**6-1**	**286**	**Sr.**
RG	**76**	**Jake Broyles***	**6-4**	**289**	**Jr.**
RT	**78**	**Charles Leno Jr.***	**6-3**	**294**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	N/A	Demarcus Lawrence	6-4	248	So.
DT	99	Michael Atkinson	6-0	312	Sr.
DT	43	Ricky Tjong-A-Tjoe	6-3	303	Jr.
DE	53	Beau Martin	6-2	253	So.
LB	33	Tommy Smith	6-1	236	Sr.
LB	**48**	**J.C. Percy***	**6-0**	**221**	**Sr.**
NB	6	Dextrell Simmons	5-10	202	Sr.
CB	**5**	**Jamar Taylor***	**5-11**	**196**	**Sr.**
CB	4	Jerrell Gavins	5-9	167	Sr.
SS	10	Jeremy Ioane	5-10	192	So.
FS	29	Lee Hightower	6-1	183	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	18	Jake Van Ginkel	6-0	186	Fr.
P	14	Trevor Harman	6-2	216	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	at Michigan State
Sept. 15	MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 22	BYU
Sept. 29	at New Mexico
Oct. 6	at Southern Miss
Oct. 13	FRESNO STATE
Oct. 20	UNLV
Oct. 27	at Wyoming
Nov. 3	SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 10	at Hawaii
Nov. 17	COLORADO STATE
Nov. 24	at Nevada

2011 RESULTS

W	vs. Georgia	35-21
W	at Toledo	40-15
W	TULSA	41-21
W	NEVADA	30-10
W	at Fresno State	57-7
W	at Colorado State	63-13
W	AIR FORCE	37-26
W	at UNLV	48-21
L	TCU	35-36
W	at San Diego State	52-35
W	WYOMING	36-14
W	NEW MEXICO	45-0
	Las Vegas Bowl	
W	vs. Arizona State	56-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	44.2	5
Rushing	171.9	40
Passing	309.4	11
Total	481.3	9
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.7	12
Rushing	110.0	17
Pass	210.9	43
Total	320.9	16
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	23

RANKING

78 FRESNO STATE | BULLDOGS

MWC rank: 2 Record: 4-9 WAC record: 3-4 (T-4th) Stadium: Bulldog Stadium (41,031)

Photo by Kelley L Cox-US PRESSWIRE

Robbie Rouse

"It's a major overhaul we're going through, but we'll get it down."
— Coach Tim DeRuyter

BULLDOGS at a GLANCE

COACH: Tim DeRuyter — At Fresno State and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Schramm
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Toth

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST BOWL: 2010, Humanitarian
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 5 offense, 8 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Derek Carr, RB Robbie Rouse, OL Austin Wentworth, OL Cody Wichmann, LB Travis Brown, LB Patrick Su'a, S Phillip Thomas, LB Jeremiah Toma

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense returns a lot of weapons and Carr could thrive even more in the new spread offense. Rouse remains a difficult target to get a hold of. Defense was a problem a year ago but could be a strength with a change of schemes and the return of top players like Thomas, DE Anthony Williams and LB Shawn Plummer.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Players still were learning the new schemes as spring camp ended, especially on offense, and it remains unclear if every player has bought into the new system. Top receiver Jalen Saunders transferred, leaving Fresno State without a top-speed wideout. Even if the schemes are completely learned, playing with chemistry is another issue.

OFFENSE

The Bulldogs are scrapping the pro-style offense used the past 15 seasons in favor of a no-huddle spread as they move into the Mountain West with new coach Tim DeRuyter.

It's been a major adjustment for Fresno State, with offensive linemen looking winded and receivers not always sure about their routes during spring camp. But quarterback Derek Carr certainly has the arm and the grasp of the game to flourish in the system once his supporting cast gets up to speed.

Carr, the younger brother of Bulldogs great David Carr, enters his second season as the starter after passing for 3,544 yards and 26 touchdowns last year.

He also will be expected to run more to keep defenses from overplaying the pass. Carr showed on occasion that he can effectively run the zone read.

Running back Robbie Rouse will still get his touches; the spread formation might open different kinds of lanes for the diminutive and productive back.

The offense lost top receiver Jalen Saunders, who chose to transfer after spring camp. But Carr still has two tall targets on the outside — 6-5 Victor Dean and 6-2 Davante Adams — to help ease the loss.

DEFENSE

The Bulldogs were tied for worst in the nation in forcing turnovers, with just nine last season. They also gave up 35.2 points per game, which ranked 106th. But Fresno State gets a handful of key players back who missed last season, most notably safety Phillip Thomas.

Prior to suffering a broken leg before the 2011 opener, Thomas was considered one of the top safeties in the West. He made 64 tackles, intercepted three passes and forced two fumbles in 2010.

Anthony Williams, a 300-pound defensive end, also is back after missing last season for violating an athletic department policy. He will look to offset the departure of two-time All-WAC selection Logan Harrell.

The linebacker corps displayed aggressiveness and appears to have made a smooth transition from the 4-3 scheme to a 3-4 base. The cornerback situation, however, still needs much work and needs to defend deep balls better this season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Fresno State ended spring camp with only non-scholarship kickers on its roster. Curtis O'Neill and Blake Dunn are competing to replace Kevin Goessling, the school's career points leader.

The Bulldogs also must find a replacement for All-American punt returner Devon Wylie. Receiver Isaiah Burse, who handled kickoffs last season, could pull double duty.

Senior punter Andrew Shapiro returns, easing some of uncertainty on special teams play. Shapiro averaged 39.7 yards per punt.

OVERVIEW

After dramatically sliding last season, Fresno State looks to return to conference-title contenders under DeRuyter. The Bulldogs plan to stress an attacking, pressure defense, with their new 3-4 base look, and will feature up-tempo, aerial play with their no-huddle, spread offense. The switch to the Mountain West, though, could hinder Fresno State's quest for immediate results.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Davante Adams: The 6-2, 200-pound redshirt freshman knows how to pull down jump balls, which could pay off big with Fresno State's new emphasis to attack vertically. He was the team's scout team Player of the Year for offense in 2011.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**4**	**Derek Carr***	**6-3**	**205**	**Jr.**
RB	**8**	**Robbie Rouse***	**5-7**	**185**	**Sr.**
WR	**11**	**Rashad Evans***	**5-9**	**180**	**Sr.**
WR	5	Victor Dean	6-5	200	So.
WR	1	Isaiah Burse	5-11	180	Jr.
WR	80	Davante Adams	6-2	200	Fr.
LT	**72**	**Austin Wentworth***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
LG	75	Trevor Richter	6-4	280	Sr.
C	**78**	**Richard Helepiko***	**6-2**	**300**	**Sr.**
RG	68	Max Devlin	6-3	275	Sr.
RT	73	Cody Wichmann	6-5	310	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	91	Anthony Williams	6-2	300	Sr.
DT	92	Tyeler Davison	6-2	305	So.
DE	**90**	**Nat Harrison***	**6-2**	**240**	**Jr.**
LB	**9**	**Travis Brown***	**6-2**	**235**	**Sr.**
LB	**32**	**Jeremiah Toma***	**6-0**	**215**	**Jr.**
LB	**30**	**Patrick Su'a***	**6-2**	**220**	**Jr.**
LB	**88**	**Tristan Okpalaugo***	**6-5**	**240**	**Sr.**
CB	2	Davon Dunn	5-11	185	So.
CB	**4**	**L.J. Jones***	**5-11**	**180**	**Jr.**
SS	**16**	**Phillip Thomas***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
FS	**20**	**Cris Wilson***	**5-8**	**175**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	38	Curtis O'Neil	5-11	200	Jr.
P	**34**	**Andrew Shapiro***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	WEBER STATE
Sept. 8	at Oregon
Sept. 15	COLORADO
Sept. 22	at Tulsa
Sept. 29	SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 6	at Colorado State
Oct. 13	at Boise State
Oct. 20	WYOMING
Oct. 27	at New Mexico
Nov. 3	HAWAII
Nov. 10	at Nevada
Nov. 24	AIR FORCE

2011 RESULTS

L	at California	21-36
L	at Nebraska	29-42
W	NORTH DAKOTA	27-22
W	at Idaho	48-24
L	MISSISSIPPI	28-38
L	BOISE STATE	7-57
W	UTAH STATE	31-21
L	at Nevada	38-45
L	LOUISIANA TECH	21-41
L	at New Mexico State	45-48
W	at Hawaii	24-21
L	SAN JOSE STATE	24-27
L	at San Diego State	28-35

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.5	52
Rushing	139.2	75
Passing	272.6	27
Total	411.9	37

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.2	106
Rushing	166.6	72
Pass	269.2	106
Total	435.9	100

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-14	-1.08	116

RANKING

79 WYOMING | COWBOYS

MWC rank: 3 Record: 8-5 MWC record: 5-2 (3rd) Stadium: War Memorial Stadium (30,514)

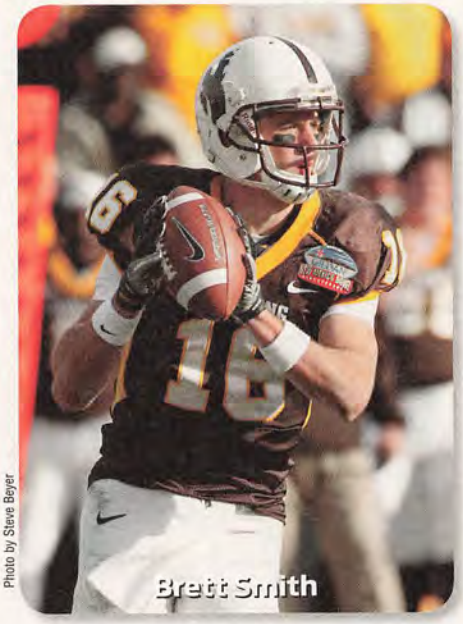


Photo by Steve Beyer

"It's the most physical defense since I've been here."
— Coach Dave Christensen, on changes made by new coordinator Chris Tormey

COWBOYS at a GLANCE

COACH: Dave Christensen: At Wyoming and overall: 18-20, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gregg Brandon
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Tormey

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1993, WAC co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 5 offense, 8 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Brett Smith, WR Chris McNeill, C Nick Carlson, DT Mike Purcell, SS Luke Ruff, CB Blair Burns

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Smith is a talented quarterback with maturity beyond his years. He is a dual-threat — he passed for 2,622 yards and ran for 710 yards last season — and is willing to carry the team on his shoulders. The secondary is deep in talent and experience.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Teams are better prepared now to neutralize Smith. Although the interior line is exceptional, there are no proven running backs, and the Cowboys might need help from newcomers. Opening at Texas is a tall task.

OFFENSE

There ought to be an award for any coach who achieves bowl bids with true freshman quarterbacks in two out of three seasons.

For Wyoming's Dave Christensen, his reward was the 2011 Mountain West Coach of the Year honor — and a few more grey specks in his closely cropped goatee.

The plan this time is for last year's freshman, Brett Smith, to stick around three more seasons. He arrived on campus in January 2011, during the week that rumors were confirmed that predecessor Austyn Carta-Samuels was transferring.

Smith gained the edge over an inexperienced field in spring ball in 2011 and never looked back at his competition. The Oregon Gatorade High School Player of the Year went on to lead the Cowboys in rushing (710 yards, 10 touchdowns) and put up twice as many scores through the air.

Smith earned MWC Freshman of the Year honors, repeating Carta-Samuels's 2009 honor, when he also led the Cowboys to the New Mexico Bowl.

While Carta-Samuels left after his sophomore year, landing at Vanderbilt, Smith is a keeper. Christensen doesn't want his prized sophomore carrying the entire load. The concern is getting him help in the running game, one area in which newcomers could help immediately.

There's plenty of experience and depth in the Chris McNeill-led receiving corps. Center Nick Carlson anchors a solid front.

DEFENSE

Defensive ends Gabe Knapton and Josh Biezuns, and linebacker Brian Hendricks — the heart and soul of Wyoming's defense for two years — are gone. So is defensive coordinator Marty English, now at rival Colorado State.

Nonetheless, Christensen is more excited about his defense than at any time in his four years in Laramie.

He's just not divulging exactly what new coordinator Chris Tormey, a former head coach at Idaho and Nevada, installed this spring. There will be more multiple looks beyond the Cowboys' basic 4-3. The changes might be more of a mindset.

Eight starters return with the strength concentrated in the secondary. Mike Purcell anchors the defensive line. Strong safety Luke Ruff is one of the more versatile athletes on the squad.

SPECIAL TEAMS

This is a traditional area of strength for the Cowboys. At 7,220-foot elevation, punters are expected to have other-worldly averages, although Laramie's notorious swirling winds often counter any altitude advantage.

Australian import Tim Gleeson takes over the job, and he averaged 50 yards per punt in one spring scrimmage. As a freshman, placekicker Daniel Sullivan connected on 7 of 11 field-goal attempts, with a long of 48 yards.

OVERVIEW

Christensen is looking to string two winning seasons together for the first time after posting records of 7-6, 3-9 and 8-5. Now, Wyoming boasts one of the more experienced rosters in the league, as well as coaching stability. If a run game materializes and the defense is as physical as Christensen promises, Wyoming could establish itself in the league's first tier.

TOP NEWCOMER

OLB Zack Berg: The redshirt freshman is a blue-collar contributor who played multiple positions in high school. Berg, who was a standout running back and linebacker in Edmonds, Wash., figures to begin the season in a backup role.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**16**	**Brett Smith***	**6-3**	**195**	**So.**
RB	8	Brandon Miller	6-0	193	Jr.
WR	**6**	**Robert Herron***	**5-10**	**180**	**Jr.**
WR	33	Dominic Rufran	6-0	185	So.
WR	3	Trey Norman	6-1	170	So.
WR	**80**	**Chris McNeill***	**6-1**	**180**	**Sr.**
LT	76	Josh Leonard	6-4	296	Sr.
LG	**51**	**Tyler Strong***	**6-3**	**292**	**Jr.**
C	**60**	**Nick Carlson***	**6-4**	**292**	**Sr.**
RG	75	Zach Rushing	6-3	295	Sr.
RT	64	Daniel Fleischman	6-6	300	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	**15**	**Ben Durbin***	**6-3**	**272**	**Sr.**
DT	**50**	**Mike Purcell***	**6-3**	**303**	**Sr.**
DT	98	Kurt Taufa'asau	6-2	284	Sr.
DE	12	Sonny Puletasi	6-3	241	So.
LB	**5**	**Korey Jones***	**6-2**	**233**	**Sr.**
LB	35	Oliver Schober	6-0	235	Sr.
LB	**43**	**Devyn Harris***	**6-3**	**225**	**Jr.**
CB	**2**	**Marqueston Huff***	**6-0**	**195**	**Jr.**
CB	**20**	**Blair Burns***	**5-10**	**180**	**So.**
SS	21	Mark Nzeocha	6-3	220	So.
FS	**29**	**Luke Ruff***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**14**	**Daniel Sullivan***	**5-10**	**185**	**So**
P	28	Tim Gleeson	6-2	195	Fr.

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Texas
Sept. 8	TOLEDO
Sept. 15	CAL POLY
Sept. 22	at Idaho
Oct. 6	at Nevada
Oct. 13	AIR FORCE
Oct. 20	at Fresno State
Oct. 27	BOISE STATE
Nov. 3	COLORADO STATE
Nov. 10	at New Mexico
Nov. 17	at UNLV
Nov. 24	SAN DIEGO STATE

2011 RESULTS

W	WEBER STATE	35-32
W	TEXAS STATE-SAN MARCOS	45-10
W	at Bowling Green	28-27
L	NEBRASKA	14-38
L	at Utah State	19-63
W	UNLV	41-14
W	at San Diego State	30-27
L	TCU	20-31
W	at Air Force	25-17
W	NEW MEXICO	31-10
L	at Boise State	14-36
W	at Colorado State	22-19
	New Mexico Bowl	
L	vs. Temple	15-37

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.1	67
Rushing	181.6	33
Passing	206.9	79
Total	388.5	59
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.8	67
Rushing	232.0	115
Pass	199.6	30
Total	431.6	98
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 12	+ 0.92	9

RANKING

81 SAN DIEGO STATE | AZTECS

MWC rank: 4 | Record: 8-5 | MWC record: 4-3 (4th) | Stadium: Qualcomm (54,000)

Leon McFadden

Photo by Steve Beyer

"We have four or five really good young running backs in the program. Now, I am not saying that they are Ronnie Hillman ..."

— Coach Rocky Long

AZTECS at a GLANCE

COACH: Rocky Long — At SDSU: 8-5, 1 year
OVERALL: 73-74, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andy Ludwig
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rocky Long

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1986, WAC
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 5 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ryan Katz, RB Adam Muema, WR Brice Butler, TE Gavin Escobar, LB Jake Fely, CB Leon McFadden, S Nat Berhe

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: If the blocking holds, SDSU has plenty of medium- and long-range threats in the passing game. Escobar is one of the best tight ends in the country. On defense, the secondary is laden with veteran athletes and speedsters expected to produce turnovers galore.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line is being rebuilt under a new position coach, which probably won't make things easier on a new quarterback and running back. The defensive line also has been rebuilt with three new starters and will be tested against the run in SDSU's final season in the Mountain West.

OFFENSE

The Aztecs have earned back-to-back bowl berths in large part because of their offense.

But most of that firepower is gone. Ryan Lindley, SDSU's career passing leader, was drafted by the Arizona Cardinals. Ronnie Hillman, SDSU's No. 3 career leading rusher, went to the Denver Broncos.

Three of their five starting blockers are gone, too.

So what can the Aztecs do about it?

They've turned to a transfer quarterback: Ryan Katz, a senior who enrolled in January from Oregon State.

At running back, Hillman is going to be replaced by a committee of backs, led by sophomore Adam Muema, who rushed for 253 yards on 42 carries last year.

The biggest worry might be about the offensive line, which became a patchwork operation in spring practice, including the move of Bryce Quigley from tight end to left tackle.

Meanwhile, Katz still faces a learning curve with SDSU's pro-style offense. Fortunately, he will have a restocked corps of pass catchers, led by USC transfer Brice Butler and tight end Gavin Escobar.

DEFENSE

Coach Rocky Long previously said that it takes a few years to learn his rare 3-3-5 defense.

It's now Year Four.

But progress could be slow because SDSU lost its top two tacklers from 2011, both of whom were drafted into the NFL — linebacker Miles Burris (Oakland) and nose tackle Jerome Long (Kansas City).

The biggest issue for SDSU will be holding the fort on the defensive line, where all three starters from last season are gone.

With all those key departures, how will the Aztecs fare against the run? That's the question that will help decide whether the Aztecs go to another bowl this year.

In the secondary, senior cornerback Leon McFadden opted not to turn pro after his junior year. He returns as likely the best cornerback in the Mountain West and the leader of a defense that's yet to reach dominant status under Long.

The Aztecs have come a long way since 2008, when SDSU ranked 113th out of 119 major college teams in total defense. Last year, SDSU ranked 68th — which was good enough sometimes, but far from what Long expects.

Many young players could emerge, including sophomore nose tackle Sam Meredith.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Aztecs are banking on a true freshman, Seamus McMorrow, who will get a shot to be the kicker and punter. His only competition will be non-scholarship players after last year's starting kicker and punter graduated.

OVERVIEW

SDSU had a lost decade from 1999-2009 — three head coaches fired and no bowl games. Now the program is back on track and will benefit from a schedule weakened by the departures of BYU, Utah and TCU from the Mountain West. But next year, SDSU also is leaving the Mountain West for greener pastures — the Big East — and will need big years from Katz, McMorrow, Muema and others to keep building the positive momentum.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Ryan Katz: He transferred after losing his starting job at Oregon State. Now he's got one year left to win the starting job and make an impact. The Aztecs' success will largely depend on how quickly he can adapt. The first game will not be easy, although the opponent will be familiar to Katz: Washington.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	5	Ryan Katz	6-1	215	Sr.
RB	4	Adam Muema	5-10	190	So.
FB	**40**	**Chad Young***	**5-11**	**225**	**Jr.**
WR	**10**	**Dylan Denso***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**
WR	**24**	**Colin Lockett***	**6-0**	**175**	**Jr.**
TE	**88**	**Gavin Escobar***	**6-6**	**245**	**Jr.**
LT	78	Bryce Quigley	6-5	260	Jr.
LG	65	Japheth Gordon	6-3	290	Jr.
C	**71**	**Alec Johnson***	**6-3**	**300**	**Sr.**
RG	**68**	**Nik Embernate***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
RT	64	Zack Dilley	6-4	385	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	47	Cody Galea	6-3	255	So.
DT	98	Sam Meredith	6-4	250	So.
DE	91	Frederick Trujillo	6-1	230	Sr.
LB	36	Nick Tenhaeff	6-2	225	Jr.
LB	**42**	**Jake Fely***	**5-10**	**200**	**So.**
LB	48	Josh Gavert	6-2	210	So.
CB	**2**	**Leon McFadden***	**5-10**	**185**	**Sr.**
CB	12	Josh Wade	6-0	185	Sr.
S	**20**	**Nat Berhe***	**5-10**	**185**	**Jr.**
S	27	Eric Pinkins	6-3	205	Jr.
S	39	Rene Siluano	5-10	185	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Seamus McMorrow	5-11	190	Fr.
P	N/A	Seamus McMorrow	5-11	190	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Washington
Sept. 8	ARMY
Sept. 15	NORTH DAKOTA
Sept. 22	SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 29	at Fresno State
Oct. 6	HAWAII
Oct. 13	COLORADO STATE
Oct. 20	at Nevada
Oct. 27	UNLV
Nov. 3	at Boise State
Nov. 10	AIR FORCE
Nov. 24	at Wyoming

2011 RESULTS

W	CAL POLY	49-21
W	at Army	23-20
W	WASHINGTON STATE	42-24
L	at Michigan	7-28
L	TCU	14-27
W	at Air Force	41-27
L	WYOMING	27-30
W	NEW MEXICO	35-7
W	at Colorado State	18-15
L	BOISE STATE	35-52
W	at UNLV	31-14
W	FRESNO STATE	35-28
	New Orleans Bowl	
L	vs. Louisiana	30-32

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.8	46
Rushing	184.5	30
Passing	242.9	49
Total	427.4	32

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.0	57
Rushing	169.5	78
Pass	221.7	55
Total	391.2	68

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 12	+ 0.92	9

RANKING

83 NEVADA | WOLF PACK

MWC rank: 5 Record: 7-6 WAC record: 5-2 WAC (T-2nd) Stadium: Mackay Stadium (29,993)

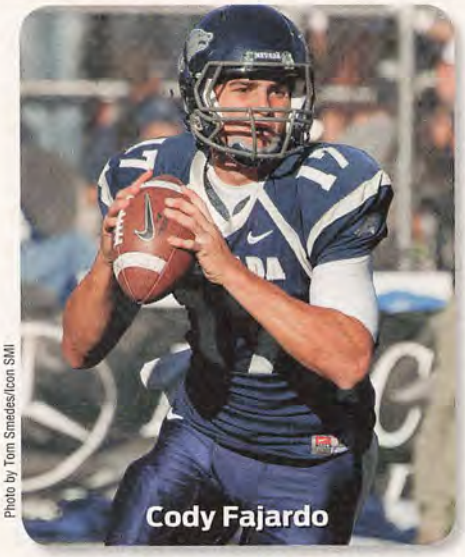


Photo by Tom Smedes/Icon SMI

"We don't have any All-Americans. ... We're going to have to put our nose to the grindstone and work at it every day." — Defensive coordinator Mike Bradeson

WOLF PACK at a GLANCE

COACH: Chris Ault – At Nevada and overall: 226-103-1, 27 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Rolovich
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bradeson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 6 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Cody Fajardo, RB Stefphon Jefferson, WR Brandon Wimberly, TE Zach Sudfeld, OT Jeff Nady, OG Chris Barker, CB Khalid Wooten, SS Duke Williams

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The run-first Pistol offense is always statistically one of the nation's best, and that should be the case again this season. The offensive line returns a bunch of talent. Defensively, the secondary — usually a huge weakness — returns three starters and should be a strength.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Outside of Fajardo, Nevada is thin at the skill positions. Can its scheme make up for a lack of talent at receiver? Fajardo also was prone to injury in 2011, and his backup is a big question mark. Defensively, the front seven has almost no experience. With three new coaches and two new coordinators, there could be an adjustment period.

OFFENSE

The Wolf Pack offense will look to add a little lightening to its thunder.

Since coach Chris Ault returned to the sidelines in 2004, he's implemented a run-first Pistol attack. Nevada led the nation in rushing in 2009, but it slowly has tried to balance the scheme with more passing.

Insert Nick Rolovich, the former coordinator in Hawaii's run-and-shoot hired by Nevada to add some passing wrinkles. Quarterback Cody Fajardo, the reigning WAC Freshman of the Year, has a few weapons in the pass game, although depth at the receiver position is an issue.

Zach Sudfeld, a sticky-handed 6-7 tight end, is a big target who could be in line for a breakout season if he stays healthy. That's a big if for the oft-injured sixth-year senior. Brandon Wimberly, who missed the 2011 season following a gunshot wound to the stomach, anchors the receiving corps.

While the line has the potential to be dominant, the offense as a whole isn't as talented as past Nevada teams. The unit will have to limit turnovers and ride scheme over skills to maintain the Wolf Pack's high offensive standard.

DEFENSE

Inexperience will mark the Wolf Pack defense, especially the front line.

Nevada does return three starters on the front seven, but one (nose guard Jack Reynoso) is returning from a broken leg and another (Albert Rosette) was a defensive end last year and will play middle linebacker this season.

The front seven is talented, but growing pains should be expected. Nevada would love to get some immediate impact from junior college transfers, such as defensive end Shane Pennix and defensive tackle Cortez Woods.

The secondary has a lot more experience. Strong safety Duke Williams was named all-conference after recording 83 tackles in 2011. Cornerback Khalid Wooten has eight career interceptions and a full season of starting under his belt. Free safety Marlon Johnson is a three-year starter.

Nevada needs its defensive backs, typically one of the team's weaknesses, to carry a unit that enters the season with several question marks.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Special teams guru Larry Lewis was hired to turn a nagging weakness into a strength.

Gone is punt returner Rishard Matthews, who had two career return touchdowns. But small and slippery kick returner Kendall Brock is back. So, too, are kickers Allen Hardison and Anthony Martinez, who shared the starting duties last season before going down with injuries.

Punting duties will be held by strong-legged lefty Chase Tenpenny, a former junior college All-American who has no experience at the FBS level.

OVERVIEW

Ault revamped his coaching staff to jolt the program as it heads into the Mountain West Conference. Despite reaching a bowl for the seventh straight season, Nevada underachieved in 2011 after a 2010 season in which it finished in the Top 25. A return to the rankings this season is unlikely, but Ault is looking for a top-three conference finish in Nevada's MWC debut.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Nigel Westbrooks: Much will be expected from Westbrooks, a transfer from Palomar College in San Marcos, Calif. He caught 52 passes for 729 yards and 11 touchdowns in 2011. "A quality young man with excellent speed," coach Chris Ault said.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**17**	**Cody Fajardo***	**6-2**	**205**	**So.**
RB	25	Stefphon Jefferson	5-11	200	Jr.
WR	4	Brandon Wimberly	6-3	210	Sr.
WR	**81**	**Aaron Bradley***	**6-1**	**180**	**So.**
WR	n/a	Nigel Westbrooks	6-1	185	Jr.
TE	**44**	**Zach Sudfeld***	**6-7**	**250**	**Sr.**
LT	**78**	**Joe Nady***	**6-7**	**290**	**Sr.**
LG	**75**	**Chris Barker***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
C	65	Matt Galas	6-1	275	So.
RG	77	Alex Pinto	6-3	300	Sr.
RT	**70**	**Joel Bitonio***	**6-4**	**300**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	99	Sam Foster	6-4	260	Jr.
DT	55	Rykeem Yates	6-2	270	Fr.
NT	**98**	**Jack Reynoso***	**6-3**	**275**	**Jr.**
DE	53	Brock Hekking	6-4	245	So.
LB	**54**	**Jeremiah Green***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**51**	**Albert Rosette***	**6-2**	**245**	**Sr.**
LB	42	DeAndre Boughton	6-1	215	Sr.
CB	**2**	**Khalid Wooten***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**
CB	22	Thaddeus Brown	5-11	180	Sr.
SS	**20**	**Duke Williams***	**6-1**	**190**	**Sr.**
FS	**8**	**Marlon Johnson***	**5-11**	**190**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**60**	**Allen Hardison***	**6-4**	**190**	**Sr.**
P	37	Chase Tenpenny	6-4	245	Jr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at California
Sept. 8	SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 15	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 22	at Hawaii
Sept. 29	at Texas State
Oct. 6	WYOMING
Oct. 13	at UNLV
Oct. 20	SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 27	at Air Force
Nov. 10	FRESNO STATE
Nov. 17	at New Mexico
Nov. 24	BOISE STATE

2011 RESULTS

L	at Oregon	20-69
W	at San Jose State	17-14
L	at Texas Tech	34-35
L	at Boise State	10-30
W	UNLV	37-0
W	NEW MEXICO	49-7
W	FRESNO STATE	45-38
W	at New Mexico State	48-34
W	HAWAII	42-28
L	LOUISIANA TECH	20-24
L	at Utah State	17-21
W	IDAHO	56-3
	Hawaii Bowl	
L	vs. Southern Miss	17-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.7	35
Rushing	247.5	8
Passing	259.2	32
Total	506.7	6
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.2	58
Rushing	147.4	56
Pass	221.9	57
Total	369.2	52
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0	59

RANKING

86 AIR FORCE | FALCONS

MWC rank: 6 | Record: 7-6 | MWC record: 3-4 (5th) | Stadium: Falcon Stadium (46,692)

Photo by Matt Quinnan/Icon SMI

"A bunch, a bunch of new faces involved. Yet, it's an eager group."
— Coach Troy Calhoun

FALCONS at a GLANCE

COACH: Troy Calhoun — At Air Force and overall: 41-24, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Mike Thiessen, Clay Hendrix, Blane Morgan
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Charlton Warren, Steve Russ

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1985
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 8; 3 offense, 3 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Connor Dietz, RB Wes Cobb, FB Mike DeWitt, OT Jason Kons, WR Mikel Hunter, OLB Alex Means, DL Nick Fitzgerald, S Anthony Wooding Jr.

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Falcons will be well coached and be very tough to prepare for because of their unique schemes. And history has shown that no matter what players are on offense, Air Force will be an elite rushing team.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Dietz isn't a great passer, so the Falcons could be more predictable on offense. This time, they might not have the quick-strike ability of previous Air Force teams. Defensively, the Falcons were porous in 2011 and will be breaking in eight new starters.

OFFENSE

Troy Calhoun's option offense will be tested, because he doesn't have a lot of experienced players to run it.

Since 1981, Air Force has finished in the national top 10 in rushing every year except one. Last season, the Falcons finished third.

The offense has evolved in the past few years into a multi-dimensional attack, capable of passing the ball to keep a defense honest, but that was with a different group of players. Eight starters have to be replaced from last season's team.

Air Force might not be so dangerous passing the ball with new starting quarterback Connor Dietz, who replaces four-year starter Tim Jefferson.

Dietz has played well in a relief role and got a rare fifth season at the academy (Air Force requires cadets to graduate in four years unless there is a hardship case, which Dietz qualified for because of an injury). He is a great leader and a better runner than Jefferson, but his passing doesn't match Jefferson's.

To complicate matters, top receivers Zack Kauth and Jonathan Warzeka graduated.

There is some experience in the backfield, even though Asher Clark and his consecutive 1,000-yard seasons have moved on. Wes Cobb, a starting fullback last year, moved to tailback in spring and is a good bet to stick there. Mike DeWitt had a good 2011 season behind Cobb at fullback.

DEFENSE

The Falcons have a new coordinator and a lot of new starters. Charlton Warren got a promotion from secondary coach/co-defensive coordinator when Matt Wallerstedt left to be linebackers coach at Texas A&M. Warren has a lot of work to do.

The Falcons bring back just three starters on defense — safety Anthony Wooding Jr., outside linebacker Alex Means and defensive lineman Nick Fitzgerald. Wooding and Fitzgerald weren't even Week One starters for the Falcons, but got pressed into duty last year because of injuries.

Air Force's biggest concern is improving a run defense that finished 109th in the nation. The Falcons hope they can overcome losing three of their top four tacklers from last year, including both inside linebackers, with some scheme changes.

Linebackers will be getting downhill and attacking more often. That fits with the overall new aggressive approach, which will feature more press coverage and blitzing.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Parker Herrington returns after a surprising junior season. Herrington won the kicking job in camp last fall and ended up earning first-team all-conference honors, making 15 of 18 field-goal attempts.

David Baska returns at punter, but he will be challenged by Will Conant in training camp.

Air Force has to replace its return men, and those jobs remain open.

OVERVIEW

Last year was a bit of a disappointment for a senior-laded Falcons squad that didn't beat a team that finished with a winning record. Expectations aren't great, but with some new teams in the conference that aren't familiar with Air Force's schemes, the Falcons could have another winning season.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Jaleel Awini: Awini was a Gatorade Player of the Year in Colorado, and had a good season at Air Force's prep school last year. If Connor Dietz falters as a starter, Air Force has a track record of going to a freshman. But Awini will be pushed by Dano Graves — the two split time at prep school.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	Connor Dietz	6-0	190	Sr.
RB	**35**	**Wes Cobb***	**5-9**	**196**	**Sr.**
FB	25	Mike DeWitt	6-1	220	Jr.
WR	10	Mikel Hunter	5-9	170	Sr.
WR	27	Ty MacArthur	5-9	170	Jr.
TE	29	Austin Briehl	6-5	240	Sr.
LT	**75**	**Jason Kons***	**6-4**	**255**	**Sr.**
LG	**67**	**Jordan Eason***	**6-3**	**255**	**Sr.**
C	65	Michael Husar Jr.	6-0	250	Jr.
RG	68	Drew Kerber	6-3	265	Jr.
RT	74	Alex Huskisson	6-6	235	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**97**	**Nick Fitzgerald***	**6-4**	**255**	**So.**
NG	89	Nick DeJulio	6-2	230	Sr.
DE	94	Joseph Champaign	6-1,	230	So.
LB	**50**	**Alex Means***	**6-5**	**230**	**Jr.**
LB	42	Austin Niklas	6-2	230	Sr.
LB	52	Josh Kusan	6-0	210	Sr.
LB	46	Jamil Cooks	6-4	210	Jr.
CB	3	Chris Miller	5-8	185	Jr.
CB	23	Steffon Batts	6-0	180	Jr.
SS	31	Brian Lindsay	6-1	220	Sr.
FS	**4**	**Anthony Wooding Jr.***	**6-2**	**183**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**18**	**Parker Herrington***	**6-5**	**185**	**Sr.**
P	**19**	**David Baska***	**6-0**	**182**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	IDAHO STATE
Sept. 8	at Michigan
Sept. 22	at UNLV
Sept. 29	COLORADO STATE
Oct. 6	NAVY
Oct. 13	at Wyoming
Oct. 20	NEW MEXICO
Oct. 27	NEVADA
Nov. 3	at Army
Nov. 10	at San Diego State
Nov. 17	HAWAII
Nov. 24	at Fresno State

2011 RESULTS

W	SOUTH DAKOTA	37-20
L	TCU	19-35
W	TENNESSEE STATE	63-24
W	at Navy (OT)	35-34
L	at Notre Dame	33-59
L	SAN DIEGO STATE	27-41
L	at Boise State	26-37
W	at New Mexico	42-0
W	ARMY	24-14
L	WYOMING	17-25
W	UNLV	45-17
W	at Colorado State	45-21
	Military Bowl	
L	vs. Toledo	41-42

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.9	19
Rushing	314.8	3
Passing	140.1	113
Total	454.9	22
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.4	72
Rushing	219.7	109
Pass	166.8	6
Total	386.5	65
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0	59

RANKING

88 HAWAII | WARRIORS

MWC rank: 7 Record: 6-7 WAC record: 3-4 (T-4th) Stadium: Aloha Stadium (50,000)

Billy Ray Stutzmann

Photo by Dave Sizer

"We have a lot of work still to do in fall camp."

— Coach Norm Chow

WARRIORS at a GLANCE

COACH: Norm Chow — At Hawaii and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tommy Lee
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Thom Kaumeyer

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010, Hawaii
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 3 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB David Graves, QB Jeremy Higgins, RB Joey Iosefa, WR Miah Ostrowski, WR Billy Ray Stutzmann, C Ben Clarke, DE Paipai Falemalu, CB Mike Edwards

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense returns key starters, even though the system has shifted from the run-and-shoot to the West Coast. Chow has several backs and receivers capable of making big plays, including wideouts Ostrowski and Trevor Davis. Iosefa, a high school quarterback, will be used all over the backfield.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: A lot has been made about the scheme change on offense, but the defensive adjustments also affects UH. Under Chow, a 5-2 will be used at times in place of the 4-3. Finding the right guys for the right spots proved challenging in the spring; especially with only one starting lineman and linebacker returning.

OFFENSE

When quarterback Jeremy Higgins began spring football, he was No. 4 on the depth chart with only a faint hope of reaching the top. When spring was done, new coach Norm Chow still couldn't pull the trigger, opting to wait until summer before naming the top guy for fall camp.

David Graves was the No. 1 man going into spring, but he didn't seize the day, too often breaking tail and running, instead of standing in the pocket waiting for the play to develop. Connecting on only 5 of 16 attempts in the spring game didn't help Graves' cause either as the offense transitions from the run-and-shoot to a two-back pro set.

Graves played in six games last year, starting two. He rushed for 154 yards and five touchdowns. He also threw for 768 yards and five scores. Higgins threw for 100 yards in the Warrior Bowl, completing a modest 10 of 23.

Tailback Will Gregory, who raised a few eyebrows with 71 yards and a score in the spring game, isn't a proven commodity. Look for returning starter Joey Iosefa to be at fullback. He led all carriers with 548 yards last year and seven touchdowns. Sterling Jackson figures in the mix. He led Hawaii with eight rushing touchdowns.

Finding a reliable tight end is proving difficult since UH hasn't employed one in 14 years. Many receivers from the run-and-shoot era are vying for only two spots on the field; look for returning starter Billy Ray Stutzmann and redshirt Chris Gant to be at the top of the list.

DEFENSE

Chow is also altering the defense, which has only four returning starters. Coordinator Thom Kaumeyer plans to pressure on nearly every down. And with that, comes high expectations from a front seven still learning the basics.

Senior defensive end Paipai Falemalu will be called upon, as well as fellow returning starter Art Laurel at linebacker. Throw in returning cornerbacks Mike Edwards and John Hardy-Tuliau, and good things could happen.

Hardy-Tuliau tied for the team lead with three picks and was third in tackles with 73. Edwards and Laurel had one interception apiece. Laurel was fourth in tackles with 61, including a team-high nine sacks.

Now, finding the other seven starters may take time.

SPECIAL TEAMS

A pair of returning starters — punter Alex Dunnachie and placekicker Tyler Hadden — are battle-tested.

Dunnachie averaged 39.7 yards last season. Chow spent the spring trying to teach the senior a little more directional punting. Hadden hit 5 of 10 field-goal attempts and 18 of 21 PATs in 2011. He was equally erratic in the spring game, but still connected on one from 53 yards.

OVERVIEW

This is going to be a difficult transition for Chow and his team. The schedule is significantly tougher in Hawaii's first year in the Mountain West, plus there are difficult non-conference meetings with USC and Brigham Young. A .500 record would be something to celebrate.

TOP NEWCOMER

C Ben Clarke: The freshman anchored the offensive line this spring, before an ankle injury cut short his participation in the Warrior Bowl. With a new O-line that has a tight end in it for the first time this century, look for Clarke to be a key component for Hawaii.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	Jeremy Higgins	6-1	200	So.
RB	**7**	**Joey Iosefa***	**6-0**	**240**	**So.**
WR	80	Miah Ostrowski	5-9	175	Sr.
WR	**5**	**Billy Ray Stutzmann***	**6-0**	**175**	**Jr.**
WR	1	Chris Gant	6-0	180	Jr.
TE	7	Tavita Woodard	6-1	250	Jr.
LT	66	Blake Muir	6-5	290	Fr.
LG	62	Chauncy Winchester	6-4	325	Jr.
C	71	Ben Clarke	6-3	275	Fr.
RG	**76**	**David Lefotu***	**6-3**	**305**	**So.**
RT	68	Sean Shigematsu	6-4	305	Fr.
DEFENSE					
DE	92	Beau Yap	6-1	260	So.
DT	91	Moses Samia	6-1	295	So.
DT	90	Geordon Hanohano	6-1	300	Sr.
DE	**42**	**Paipai Falemalu***	**6-3**	**245**	**Sr.**
LB	**41**	**Art Laurel***	**6-0**	**235**	**Jr.**
LB	3	T.J. Talmatuia	6-3	235	So.
LB	55	George Daily-Lyles	5-11	230	Jr.
CB	**2**	**Mike Edwards***	**5-10**	**180**	**Jr.**
CB	**33**	**John Hardy-Tuliau***	**5-11**	**165**	**Jr.**
S	18	Mike Sellers	5-11	175	So.
S	9	Bubba Poueu-Luna	5-11	175	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**27**	**Tyler Hadden***	**5-11**	**180**	**So.**
P	**31**	**Alex Dunnachie***	**6-4**	**220**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at USC
Sept. 15	LAMAR
Sept. 22	NEVADA
Sept. 29	at BYU
Oct. 6	at San Diego State
Oct. 13	NEW MEXICO
Oct. 27	at Colorado State
Nov. 3	at Fresno State
Nov. 10	BOISE STATE
Nov. 17	at Air Force
Nov. 24	UNLV
Dec. 1	SOUTH ALABAMA

2011 RESULTS

W	COLORADO	34-17
L	at Washington	32-40
L	at UNLV	20-40
W	UC DAVIS	56-14
W	at Louisiana Tech	44-26
L	at San Jose State	27-28
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	45-34
W	at Idaho	16-14
L	UTAH STATE	31-35
L	at Nevada	28-42
L	FRESNO STATE	21-24
W	TULANE	35-23
L	BYU	20-41

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.5	36
Rushing	95.4	113
Passing	308.8	12
Total	404.2	43

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.1	80
Rushing	142.5	53
Pass	244.9	85
Total	387.4	66

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-2	-0.15	74

RANKING

93 COLORADO STATE | RAMS

MWC rank: 8 Record: 3-9 MWC record: 1-6 (T-6th) Stadium: Sonny Lubick Field at Hughes Stadium (32,500)

Photo by Ron Chenoy-US PRESSWIRE

"They try to turn practice into something you don't dread."
— Center Weston Richburg, on the new coaching staff

RAMS at a GLANCE

COACH: Jim McElwain — At CSU and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Baldwin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Marty English, Al Simmons

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2002
LAST BOWL: 2008, New Mexico Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Chris Nwoke, TE Crockett Gillmore, WR Marquise Law, C Weston Richburg, LB Shaquil Barrett, CB Momo Thomas, P Pete Kontodiakos

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense has developed tremendous depth at linebacker and will again show a formidable pass rush. The running game has the personnel to rank among the best in the conference.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The first-year staff has its work cut out to "change the culture." Pass protection was an obvious issue in the spring. The run defense must improve in a big way after allowing opponents to rush for at least 225 yards in seven games last season.

OFFENSE

First-time head coach Jim McElwain — fresh off a national championship stint as Alabama's offensive coordinator — established himself as a man of patience after the Rams' first spring scrimmage.

"You either can't protect or you have a pretty decent pass rusher," he said of Colorado State's posting/allowing 27 sacks that day.

The sacks decreased to six in the spring game, but the first-team offense was still looking for its first spring touchdown.

There was a learning curve for new terminology in the "pro-multiple" offense. And the offensive line was missing two tackles.

While the offense figures to take time to mature — patience needed — there is some exceptional rising talent.

Powerfully built running back Chris Nwoke didn't crack the starting backfield until the seventh game of last season, but he exploded with games of 232 and 269 yards, respectively. Third-year starting center Weston Richburg is a cerebral anchor and could be a Rimington Trophy finalist by the time he leaves.

Wide receiver Marquise Law has emerged from three years of near anonymity, and tight end Crockett Gillmore is a big, reliable target.

Mobile quarterback Garrett Grayson lost his freshman redshirt two-thirds of the way into last season, and wound up starting three games. The prior staff had hitched its future to quarterback Pete Thomas, who transferred before McElwain took over the job.

DEFENSE

Defensive leaders Nordly Capi (the 2011 conference sack leader) and all-league linebacker candidate Mike Orakpo were tossed off the team in the spring. An off-campus fight meant the end of the college careers of Colorado State's best young defensive talents.

Yet, the defense continued to thrive in the spring thanks to end John Froland, as well as developing linebacker depth. The Rams adjusted on the fly to become stronger.

Prior to the suspensions, the biggest news on defense was transitioning to the 3-4. The Rams had worked in some uneven fronts under the prior staff. This will be a wholesale change, allowing for some 4-3 adjustments when dictated by opposing offenses.

"When you're at Alabama or Mississippi you can get a bunch of those D-linemen," coordinator Marty English said of his boss's SEC ties. "It's easiest for us to recruit more linebacker types here."

Fifth-year senior Momo Thomas anchors the secondary. A promising starter as a true freshman, his career was nearly derailed by a shoulder injury. Safety/nickel Shaq Bell, who converted from corner, turned heads when he won the spring game on an interception return.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Pete Kontodiakos has a booming leg (43.6-yard average, No. 20 nationally), further aided by the home field altitude advantage. The return game is solid, but the placekicking position is up for grabs.

OVERVIEW

The Rams have developed an obvious new spring in their step during the offseason after morale had been beaten down by a trio of 3-9 seasons. McElwain won't get it turned around overnight. He can, however, pump enthusiasm back into the program.

TOP NEWCOMER

S Trent Matthews: The redshirt freshman worked his way to a first-team safety position this spring in an otherwise veteran defense. Matthews, from Converse, Texas, could have played last season in an emergency.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**18**	**Garrett Grayson***	**6-2**	**207**	**So.**
RB	**6**	**Chris Nwoke***	**6-0**	**214**	**Jr.**
WR	**2**	**Thomas Coffman***	**5-10**	**172**	**So.**
WR	9	Marquise Law	6-4	193	Sr.
WR	5	Charles Lovett	5-8	172	So.
TE	**10**	**Crockett Gillmore***	**6-6**	**244**	**Jr.**
LT	**77**	**Joe Caprioglio***	**6-6**	**312**	**Sr.**
LG	75	Brandon Haynes	6-3	3-07	Jr.
C	**70**	**Weston Richburg***	**6-4**	**302**	**Jr.**
RG	**64**	**Jordan Gragert***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
RT	78	Jared Baird	6-7	323	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	90	Joe Kawoluk	6-6	250	Fr.
NT	96	Curtis Wilson	6-4	254	Jr.
DE	**57**	**John Froland***	**6-5**	**250**	**So.**
LB	**18**	**Davis Burl***	**6-2**	**236**	**Sr.**
LB	40	Max Morgan	6-1	212	So.
LB	**43**	**James Skelton***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**56**	**Shaquil Barrett***	**6-2**	**241**	**Jr.**
CB	**5**	**Momo Thomas***	**5-9**	**182**	**Sr.**
CB	19	DeAndre Elliott	6-1	172	Fr.
SS	16	Trent Matthews	6-3	195	Fr.
FS	**12**	**Austin Gray***	**6-3**	**209**	**So.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	12	Jared Roberts	6-1	196	Fr.
P	**41**	**Pete Kontodiakos***	**6-3**	**210**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Colorado (Denver)
Sept. 8	NORTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 15	at San Jose State
Sept. 22	UTAH STATE
Sept. 29	at Air Force
Oct. 6	FRESNO STATE
Oct. 13	at San Diego State
Oct. 27	HAWAII
Nov. 3	at Wyoming
Nov. 10	UNLV
Nov. 17	at Boise State
Nov. 24	NEW MEXICO

2011 RESULTS

W	at New Mexico	14-10
W	NORTHERN COLORADO	33-14
L	at Colorado	14-28
W	at Utah State (OT)	35-34
L	SAN JOSE STATE	31-38
L	BOISE STATE	13-63
L	at UTEP	17-31
L	at UNLV	35-38
L	SAN DIEGO STATE	15-18
L	at TCU	10-34
L	AIR FORCE	21-45
L	WYOMING	19-22

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.4	101
Rushing	166.8	44
Passing	184.6	90
Total	351.4	87
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.3	91
Rushing	233.7	116
Pass	179.6	13
Total	413.3	85
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-4	-0.33	85

RANKING

118 UNLV | REBELS

MWC rank: 9 Record: 2-10 MWC record: 1-6 (T-6th) Stadium: Sam Boyd Stadium (36,800)

Photo by Steve Beyer

Tim Cornett

"Let's be guys that achieve rather than guys that have potential to achieve."
— Coach Bobby Hauck

REBELS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bobby Hauck — At UNLV: 4-21, 2 years
OVERALL: 84-38, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Myers
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: J.D. Williams

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Big West co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2000, Las Vegas
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Nick Sherry, RB Tim Cornett, WR/KR Marcus Sullivan, TE Jake Phillips, DE James Boyd, DE Parker Holloway, LB Princeton Jackson, CB Sidney Hodge

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Rebels developed a strong running game midway through last season, and that should continue with Cornett expected to have a big year. He will run behind a line that returns every starter. In the spring, the defensive line showed athleticism and talent that had been missing in recent seasons.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Whoever starts at quarterback has plenty to prove. The defense appears improved, but it has been atrocious, so there is plenty of ground to make up. The Rebels might start only four seniors; on offense, eight starters could be freshmen and sophomores.

OFFENSE

When Colorado-bound Nick Sherry was forced to find another school after the Buffaloes fired coach Dan Hawkins in 2010, UNLV jumped in and convinced him to commit to the Rebels.

Now the question is whether the Rebels will commit to Sherry or returning starter Caleb Herring at quarterback.

Sherry, a redshirt freshman, appeared to finish spring practices stronger than Herring, a junior. Coach Bobby Hauck listed the competition as even and said he hopes to make a decision early in training camp.

It's not an even competition at running back, where junior Tim Cornett is the clear leader. He rushed for 671 yards and seven touchdowns last season, averaging 5.6 yards per carry. Cornett built on that success in the spring, adding more consistency to his outstanding burst while showing the potential to become the Rebels' first 1,000-yard rusher since Dominique Dorsey in 2004.

The running and passing games should benefit from a line that returns intact, and UNLV's receivers get back sophomore playmaker Marcus Sullivan, who was academically ineligible last season.

DEFENSE

UNLV hasn't fielded a quality defense since the early 2000s and has allowed more than 400 yards and 30 points per game in each of the past four seasons. The Rebels gave up a 40.4-point average last season, their worst since allowing 45.9 in 1996.

There finally is some hope, especially up front. The ends, in particular, had an excellent spring, giving UNLV size and athleticism that had been missing.

Junior James Boyd switched from quarterback to defensive end before the spring game, and repeatedly wound up in the offensive backfield. The 6-5, 255-pound junior originally signed with USC and was considered one of the nation's top end prospects in 2009.

The secondary also has potential. Two sophomores and a redshirt freshman are listed among the starters, but this is a group that should improve as the season progresses.

Linebacker also should see some improvement, with senior Princeton Jackson and junior Tani Maka leading the way.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Rebels have one of the Mountain West's better units. Junior kicker Nolan Kohorst made 9 of 14 field-goal attempts last season. Senior punter Chase Lansford averaged 41.2 yards per attempt.

Getting back Sullivan is the biggest boost. He averaged 27.9 yards per kickoff return two seasons ago. Seven of his 35 returns went for at least 37 yards, and five went for 50 or more.

OVERVIEW

This is a program that last experienced a winning record in 2000, and six of its past eight seasons ended with two victories. Hauck used his first two seasons to tear down the program with hopes of building it back in the image he prefers. That building process begins this season, but don't expect the Rebels to start making bowl plans. The hope is just that the apparent improvement this spring translates into a couple more victories in the fall.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE James Boyd: He was given the chance to win the quarterback job, but on the final day of spring practices, Boyd was switched to his more natural position. Boyd was considered a top defensive end prospect when he signed with USC in 2009, and he showed that ability in the spring game despite not knowing the plays. He could be a major impact player.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	15	Nick Sherry	6-5	240	Fr.
RB	**35**	**Tim Cornett***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
FB	**37**	**William Vea***	**6-0**	**230**	**So.**
WR	18	Marcus Sullivan	5-9	195	So.
WR	81	Devante Davis	6-3	200	So.
TE	46	Jake Phillips	6-6	245	Fr.
LT	**69**	**Brett Boyko***	**6-7**	**310**	**So.**
LG	**78**	**Cameron Jefferson***	**6-6**	**300**	**So.**
C	**79**	**Robert Waterman***	**6-2**	**290**	**So.**
RG	**64**	**Doug Zismann***	**6-2**	**300**	**Sr.**
RT	**77**	**Yusef Rodgers***	**6-2**	**260**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	10	James Boyd	6-5	255	Jr.
DT	**95**	**Alex Klorman***	**6-2**	**270**	**Jr.**
DT	**99**	**Tyler Gaston***	**6-3**	**290**	**Jr.**
DE	90	Parker Holloway	6-4	240	Jr.
LB	55	John Lotulelei	6-0	235	Sr.
LB	**41**	**Tani Maka***	**6-1**	**240**	**Jr.**
LB	**40**	**Princeton Jackson***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
CB	17	Kenneth Penny	5-11	170	So.
CB	**23**	**Sidney Hodge***	**5-8**	**175**	**Jr.**
SS	29	Tajh Hasson	6-1	190	So.
FS	42	Peni Vea	6-1	195	Fr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**27**	**Nolan Kohorst***	**6-0**	**175**	**Jr.**
P	**39**	**Chase Lansford***	**6-2**	**195**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	MINNESOTA
Sept. 8	NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 15	WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 22	AIR FORCE
Sept. 29	at Utah State
Oct. 6	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 13	NEVADA
Oct. 20	at Boise State
Oct. 27	at San Diego State
Nov. 3	NEW MEXICO
Nov. 10	at Colorado State
Nov. 17	WYOMING
Nov. 24	at Hawaii

2011 RESULTS

L	at Wisconsin	17-51
L	at Washington State	7-59
W	HAWAII	40-20
L	SOUTHERN UTAH	16-41
L	at Nevada	0-37
L	at Wyoming	14-41
W	COLORADO STATE	38-35
L	BOISE STATE	21-48
L	at New Mexico	14-21
L	at Air Force	17-45
L	SAN DIEGO STATE	14-31
L	at TCU	9-56

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.3	113
Rushing	164.3	48
Passing	109.6	118
Total	273.8	117
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	40.4	118
Rushing	194.2	99
Pass	249.0	90
Total	443.2	105
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.25	38

RANKING

120 NEW MEXICO | LOBOS

MWC rank: 10 | Record: 1-11 | MWC record: 1-6 MWC (T-6th) | Stadium: University (39,224)

B.R. Holbrook

Photo by Patrick Green/ Icon SMI

"People need to understand this is only the first step in a foundation."
— Coach Bob Davie

LOBOS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bob Davie — At New Mexico: 1st year
OVERALL: 35-25, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bob DeBesse
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Mills

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1964, WAC co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2007, New Mexico
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 7 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB B.R. Holbrook, RB Kasey Carrier, WR Ty Kirk, WR Lamaar Thomas, NT Reggie Ellis, DE Joseph Harris, ILB Dallas Bollema

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Lobos have 22 seniors, 11 of whom are fifth-year players recruited by former coach Rocky Long. They will have to provide the leadership this team desperately needs, and also likely will have to carry the team at several key positions.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Lobos have very little depth. UNM finished spring practice with 50 returning scholarship players and three 2012 recruits who enrolled early. Even with 21 recruits set to arrive in August, the Lobos' lack of experience behind their starters could be a major factor as they try to climb out of the Mountain West basement.

OFFENSE

Fifth-year senior quarterback B.R. Holbrook is one of the few Lobos who has a starting spot all but etched in stone. His backups are junior college transfer David Vega and true freshman Cole Gautsche.

Holbrook completed 141 of 236 passes last season for 1,490 yards, with four touchdowns and seven interceptions. He'll have to show some running skills, too, as new coach Bob Davie and coordinator Bob DeBesse are running a Pistol attack.

The Lobos have a strong group of receivers who can help Holbrook in the passing game. Senior Ty Kirk is fully recovered from the knee injury that caused him to miss three games last season. Senior Lamaar Thomas, a former Ohio State letterman, is also healthier after appearing in just four games.

The line features four returning starters — center LaMar Bratton, guard Calvin McDowney, and tackles Korian Chambers and Dillon Farrell — but they have to stay out of the trainer's room to prevent a lack of experienced backups from becoming a factor.

Junior Kasey Carrier leads the running back corps, which emerged as a strength during spring practice. Carrier redshirted in 2011 due to an ankle injury.

DEFENSE

Depth issues plagued the Lobos for years as they held fast to a 4-3 scheme under former coach Mike Locksley. Davie has switched to a 3-4, which immediately gives the team some breathing room.

Senior tackle Reggie Ellis, the lone returning starter on the line, will have to be its anchor. Junior end Jacori Greer, who came off the bench last year to record 27 tackles, will be a starter. Senior Ugo Uzodinma will switch from tackle to end.

The loss of all-conference linebacker Carmen Messina, who led the Lobos with 142 tackles and three sacks, will be difficult to overcome. Dallas Bollema was third on the team with 68 tackles and will play on the inside this season. Joseph Harris (55 tackles) will move to the outside.

Freddy Young and Dante Caro return as the starting safeties, but the cornerbacks remain in flux. DeShawn Mills appears to be healthy after appearing in four games last fall. Returning starter Destry Berry is trying to hold off Devonta Tabannah and Tim Foley on the left side.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ben Skaer returns as the starter after averaging 39.7 yards per punt last season. The departure of James Aho, who was just 6 of 12 on field-goal attempts, leaves Justus Adams as the primary placekicker. Adams, an Albuquerque native and former walk-on, was the kickoff specialist last season.

OVERVIEW

The depth chart should be written in the lightest pencil, since Davie repeatedly has said the roster will remain in flux until the Sept. 1 opener vs. Southern. The Lobos are coming off a dreadful run (3-33 in three years under Locksley), so this year — and likely the next few — will be focused on rebuilding from the ground up.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR/RB Carlos Wiggins: The freshman figures to be one of the fastest players on the team, which gives him a chance to play early. His size (5-8, 165) might preclude a lot of work on offense, but Wiggins could at least help out on the special teams units.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	**B.R. Holbrook***	6-3	195	Sr.
RB	21	Kasey Carrier	5-9	180	Jr.
WR	84	**Ty Kirk***	6-2	180	Sr.
WR	7	Lamaar Thomas	6-0	185	Sr.
WR	85	Quintell Solomon	6-3	185	Sr.
TE	97	**Lucas Reed***	6-6	232	Sr.
LT	68	**Korian Chambers***	6-6	322	Sr.
LG	61	**Calvin McDowney***	6-3	340	Jr.
C	66	**LaMar Bratton***	6-2	275	So.
RG	71	Darryl Johnson	6-4	305	Jr.
RT	63	**Dillon Farrell***	6-5	290	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	44	Jacori Greer	6-3	240	Jr.
NT	92	**Reggie Ellis***	6-2	285	Sr.
DE	49	Ugo Uzodinma	6-4	280	Sr.
LB	44	**Joseph Harris***	6-2	222	Sr.
LB	39	Joe Stoner	5-10	224	Sr.
LB	41	**Dallas Bollema***	6-2	225	Jr.
LB	45	Tevin Newman	6-0	190	So.
CB	24	**Destry Berry***	5-9	177	Sr.
CB	29	DeShawn Mills	5-10	176	Sr.
SS	31	Freddy Young	6-1	205	Sr.
FS	17	**Dante Caro***	6-0	190	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	98	Justus Adams	6-4	180	Jr.
P	35	**Ben Skaer***	6-0	185	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	SOUTHERN
Sept. 8	at Texas
Sept. 15	at Texas Tech
Sept. 22	at New Mexico State
Sept. 29	BOISE STATE
Oct. 6	TEXAS STATE
Oct. 13	at Hawaii
Oct. 20	at Air Force
Oct. 27	FRESNO STATE
Nov. 3	at UNLV
Nov. 10	WYOMING
Nov. 17	NEVADA
Nov. 24	at Colorado State

2011 RESULTS

L	COLORADO STATE	10-14
L	at Arkansas	3-52
L	TEXAS TECH	13-59
L	SAM HOUSTON STATE (OT)	45-48
L	NEW MEXICO STATE	28-42
L	at Nevada	7-49
L	at TCU	0-69
L	AIR FORCE	0-42
L	at San Diego State	7-35
W	UNLV	21-14
L	at Wyoming	10-31
L	at Boise State	0-45

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	12.0	120
Rushing	113.2	103
Passing	183.0	92
Total	296.2	113
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	41.7	119
Rushing	246.9	119
Pass	245.2	86
Total	492.1	118
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-8	-0.67	100

Watered down WAC is Louisiana Tech's to lose

Before we delve into an analysis of the 2012 WAC race, let's take a minute to review who's actually participating in the 2012 WAC race.

Three longtime members, Nevada, Fresno State and Hawaii, are gone — as of July 1, they will be members of the Mountain West.

Louisiana Tech, Utah State, Idaho, San Jose State and New Mexico State will remain in the WAC (because they didn't have better options).

Those five continuing members will be joined by Texas State and Texas-San Antonio —— both are newcomers to the Football Bowl Subdivision — to form a seven-team conference.

For now. Several schools were possible expansion targets for Conference USA, the Mountain West Conference and the Sun Belt, as of late spring.

All of the turnover has resulted in the following changes, qualifiers and caveats this fall:

• The league has just one bowl affiliation: The Famous Idaho Potato Bowl in Boise.

• Texas-San Antonio and Texas State are eligible for the conference title but cannot participate in the postseason due to their FBS transitional status (TSU is in the second year of the two-year process; UTSA is in the first).

• Victories over Texas State count toward bowl eligibility; victories over UTSA do not.

Got it?

Now that we've addressed those matters: Who's going to win this thing?

That seems fairly straightforward: Louisiana Tech is the clear favorite.

The Bulldogs won the conference last season with a 6-1 league record when Nevada, Hawaii and Fresno State were involved.

With most of its starting lineup returning — a lineup that includes a veteran quarterback, talent on both lines and proven playmakers — La. Tech's advantage relative to the adjusted competition is even greater.

Only two teams seem capable of challenging the Bulldogs: Utah State and San Jose State.

Both are ascendant programs with veteran rosters. But they'll need to far exceed expectations — or have Louisiana Tech stumble mightily — in order to capture the league title.

Idaho and New Mexico State simply suffered too much attrition to compete with the league's upper echelon.

Meanwhile, it's difficult to envision a scenario in which newcomers Texas State and UTSA don't finish at the bottom of the standings.

The jump in competition from FCS to FBS — even WAC-level FBS — is simply too great to overcome in one season.

— Jon Wilner

WAC Picks

	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Louisiana Tech	Bulldogs return 14 starters, including veteran QB Colby Cameron and four on OL.	The defensive front seven must be overhauled, especially at linebacker.	Best combination of talent and experience makes La. Tech the prohibitive favorite.
2. Utah State	Two options at quarterback with Adam Kennedy and Chuckie Keeton.	Biggest game of the year is on the road: La. Tech in mid-November.	Momentum continues from strong finish to 2011; Aggies once again become bowl eligible.
3. San Jose State	The defensive front will be a force and there's talent at the skill positions.	Starting over at QB after Tate Forcier's abrupt offseason departure.	If newcomer David Fales provides stability at QB, Spartans will challenge for WAC title.
4. New Mexico State	Aggies bound to move up with departure of Nevada, Hawaii and Fresno State.	A defense that couldn't stop anyone in 2011 returns just four starters.	NMSU should be better but isn't ready to break into league's top tier.
5. Idaho	All-American punter Bobby Cowan (46.4 yards per punt) returns.	It's never a good sign when your punter is your best player.	Vandals lost too much on both lines to keep pace with La. Tech, USU and SJSU.
6. Texas State	The Bobcats return 14 starters and have a proven coach in Dennis Franchione.	They aren't in the FCS anymore: Talent upgrades needed at every position.	If TSU wins more than two WAC games, Franchione should get COY consideration.
7. UTSA	Program has significant long-term potential because of resources and in-state talent.	In the short term, wins will be tough to find. Minot State no longer on schedule.	Despite loads of returning starters, Roadrunners unlikely to win more than one or two WAC games.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-WAC Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Colby Cameron	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
RB	Kerwynn Williams	Sr.	Utah State
RB	Hunter Lee	So.	Louisiana Tech
WR	Quinton Patton	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
WR	Noel Grigsby	Jr.	San Jose State
TE	Ryan Otten	Sr.	San Jose State
C	Stephen Warner	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
OL	David Quessenberry	Sr.	San Jose State
OL	Tyler Larsen	Jr.	Utah State
OL	Davonte Wallace	Jr.	New Mexico State
OL	Oscar Molina-Sanchez	Sr.	Utah State
AP	Kerwynn Williams	Sr.	Utah State
K	Matt Nelson	Sr.	Louisiana Tech

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Travis Johnson	Sr.	San Jose State
DL	Justin Ellis	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
DL	Travis Raciti	So.	San Jose State
DL	Walton Taumoepeau	Sr.	New Mexico State
LB	Bojay Filimoeatu	Sr.	Utah State
LB	Keith Smith	Jr.	San Jose State
LB	Joplo Bartu	Sr.	Texas State
DB	Chad Boyd	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
DB	Gary Walker	Sr.	Idaho
DB	McKade Brady	Sr.	Utah State
DB	Jamel Johnson	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
P	Ryan Allen	Sr.	Louisiana State

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Andrew Manley	So.	New Mexico State
RB	DeLeon Eskridge	Sr.	San Jose State
RB	Terrence Franks	So.	Texas State
WR	Myles White	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
WR	Jabari Carr	So.	San Jose State
TE	Mike LaGrone	Jr.	Idaho
C	Nicholas Kaspar	So.	San Jose State
OL	Kevin Saia	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
OL	Eric Schultz	Jr.	Utah State
OL	Andrew Kersten	Sr.	New Mexico State
OL	Oscar Johnson	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
AP	Justin Veltung	Sr.	Idaho
K	Trey Farquhar	Sr.	Idaho

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Donte Savage	Sr.	New Mexico State
DL	Shakeil Lucas	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
DL	Anthony Larceval	Jr.	San Jose State
DL	Al Lapuaho	Sr.	Utah State
LB	B.J. Adolpho	Sr.	New Mexico State
LB	Steven Kurfehs	Jr.	UTSA
LB	Conrad Scheidt	Sr.	Idaho
DB	Nevin Lawson	Jr.	Utah State
DB	Dave Clark	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
DB	Quinn Giles	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
DB	Ronnie Yell	Sr.	San Jose State
P	Bobby Cowan	Sr.	Idaho

THE BIG ONES

Aug. 30	Louisiana Tech vs. Texas A&M (Shreveport)
Sept. 1	Texas State at Houston
Sept. 1	San Jose State at Stanford
Sept. 7	Utah at Utah State
Sept. 8	Louisiana Tech at Houston
Sept. 15	Utah State at Wisconsin
Sept. 15	Idaho at LSU
Sept. 29	San Jose State at Navy
Oct. 5	Utah State at BYU
Oct. 13	Utah State at San Jose State
Nov. 3	New Mexico State at Auburn
Nov. 17	Utah State at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 17	BYU at San Jose State
Nov. 24	BYU at New Mexico State
Nov. 24	Louisiana Tech at San Jose State

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Champion Famous Idaho Potato Bowl

WAC
WESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

TOP 5 NFL TALENT

1. David Quessenberry	OT	Sr.	San Jose State	Potential to be mid-round draft pick.
2. Stephen Warner	C	Sr.	La. Tech	Multi-year starter anchors the WAC's best line.
3. Ryan Otten	TE	Sr.	San Jose State	Averaged 14.2 yards per catch, 5 TDs.
4. Quinton Patton	WR	Sr.	La. Tech	Big-play wideout on Biletnikoff Award watch list.
5. Kerwynn Williams	RB/KR	Sr.	Utah State	Averaged 116.9 all-purpose yards per game.

Most Valuable Player

Colby Cameron
QB, Louisiana Tech

Offensive Player of the Year

Kerwynn Williams
RB/KR, Utah State

Defensive Player of the Year

Travis Johnson
DE, San Jose State

Newcomer of the Year

Shaun Rutherford
QB, Texas State

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Colby Cameron	Louisiana Tech
Strongest Arm	David Fales	San Jose State
Best Scrambler	Shaun Rutherford	Texas State
Coolest in the Clutch	Colby Cameron	Louisiana Tech
Toughest to Bring Down	Kerwynn Williams	Utah State
Best Hands	Noel Grigsby	San Jose State
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Quinton Patton	Louisiana Tech
Best Pass Blocker	David Quessenberry	San Jose State
Best Run Blocker	Tyler Larsen	Utah State
Best Pass Rusher	Travis Johnson	San Jose State
Best Cover Corner	Jumanne Robertson	Utah State
Special Teams Demon	Kerwynn Williams	Utah State

RANKING

72 LOUISIANA TECH | BULLDOGS

WAC rank: 1 Record: 8-5 WAC record: 6-1 (1st) Stadium: Joe Aillet Stadium: 30,600

Photo by Kirby Lee

"We have big-play potential on the team, which is something we have lacked in the past."
— Coach Sonny Dykes

BULLDOGS at a GLANCE

COACH: Sonny Dykes — At Louisiana Tech and overall: 13-12, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony Franklin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tommy Spangler
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010

RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Colby Cameron, WR Quinton Patton, WR Myles White, DE IK Enemkpali, SS Chad Boyd, FS Jamel Johnson, P Ryan Allen

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense has four returning starters up front, a returning starter at QB and a 1,200-yard receiver in the mix. Ray Guy Award-winning punter Ryan Allen is back. Coach Sonny Dykes signed an extension the day before last year's bowl game, giving the returning WAC champs a solid foundation for repeat success.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense lost the WAC Defensive Player of the Year in LB Adrien Cole, and several other key performers. Could non-conference games vs. Texas A&M, Illinois, Virginia and Houston lead to another 1-4 start? If so, that would kill the momentum of the team's surprising 2011 campaign.

OFFENSE

Colby Cameron is the clear-cut starter at quarterback, the first time in three years under coach Sonny Dykes there has been such certainty in the pass-happy offense.

Of course Cameron held the starting job in 2010 before losing it. And Cameron had seemingly won the gig in spring 2011 before losing out in fall camp to 17-year-old true freshman Nick Isham, who started seven games last year.

But Cameron solidified his starting role by leading the Bulldogs down the stretch last season. He helped Tech to the WAC title, averaging nearly 240 passing yards per game, with 13 touchdowns and only three interceptions. Isham transferred in the spring.

Making life easier for Cameron are four returning starters on the line and speedy receivers. Senior All-WAC wideout Quinton Patton (1,202 receiving yards, 11 touchdowns) is the headliner.

Sophomore tailback Hunter Lee, who started four games in 2011 as a freshman walk-on, will be the starter, but his ability to carry the load for a whole season is uncertain. Senior backup Ray Holley should see plenty of reps.

DEFENSE

Louisiana Tech loses some key pieces to a unit that led the WAC in scoring defense.

Graduation losses include: linebackers Jay Dudley and Adrien Cole (WAC Defensive Player of the Year); cornerback Terry Carter; and defensive ends Matt Broha and Christian Lacey. The Bulldogs have to replace 372 tackles — including 44 for loss and 18 sacks — and six interceptions.

The 4-2-5 defense won't be as good, but it won't have to be in the watered-down WAC. The cornerbacks and linebackers have a lot of question marks due to inexperience, but there is plenty of potential.

The strengths are on the defensive line and at safety. Strong safety Chad Boyd can be one of the WAC's top players, but he sat out spring with a torn labrum in his right shoulder.

Justin Ellis and Shakeil Lucas start at tackle, while Jon'al White is a third run-stuffer in the rotation. Defensive ends Kendrick James and IK Enemkpali have big shoes to fill as last year's starters combined for 16 sacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS

If a punter can be a team MVP, Ryan Allen is your guy. Allen won the 2011 Ray Guy Award with a 46.1-yard average, while leading the nation with 39 punts inside the 20, including 22 that fell within the 10.

Kicker Matt Nelson can be better, even after a 15-field goal junior season that included four from beyond 40 yards. There are plenty of speedy options in the return game.

OVERVIEW

The offense should be better with Cameron comfortable in Dykes' pass-happy offense, and the program seems to be in fine shape with possible conference realignment coming for the 2013 season. Tech, despite a 1-4 start, won the WAC and reached a bowl game in 2011. The Bulldogs should defend their league crown despite some big personnel losses.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR D.J. Banks: The Tulane transfer from nearby West Monroe, La., looked right at home in spring drills, having two 100-yard receiving games in scrimmages. He left a good impression by capping the spring game with an 80-yard touchdown grab. Banks should grab plenty of passes in this offense.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	**Colby Cameron***	6-2	205	Sr.
RB	36	Hunter Lee	5-10	200	So.
WR	7	**Myles White***	6-1	185	Sr.
WR	4	**Quinton Patton***	6-1	195	Sr.
WR	8	Jacarri Jackson	6-2	185	Jr.
WR	19	Andrew Guillot	5-10	180	Sr.
LT	67	**Oscar Johnson***	6-6	350	Sr.
LG	57	**Kevin Sala***	6-2	305	Sr.
C	63	**Stephen Warner***	6-0	315	Sr.
RG	66	Matthew Shepperd	6-2	305	Jr.
RT	78	**Jordan Mills***	6-6	315	Sr.
DEFENSE					
LE	42	Kendrick James	6-1	240	Jr.
DT	70	**Justin Ellis***	6-2	340	Jr.
DT	94	**Shakeil Lucas***	6-2	280	Jr.
RE	41	IK Enemkpali	6-2	245	Jr.
LB	46	Rufus Porter	6-1	210	Jr.
LB	56	Solomon Randle	5-11	230	Sr.
CB	24	**Dave Clark***	6-2	190	Sr.
CB	15	Brice Abraham	5-11	175	Fr.
NB	47	Javontay Crowe	5-11	185	Sr.
SS	31	**Chad Boyd***	5-10	200	Sr.
FS	20	**Jamel Johnson***	6-1	200	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	33	**Matt Nelson***	5-10	160	Sr.
P	86	**Ryan Allen***	6-2	215	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	TEXAS A&M
Sept. 8	at Houston
Sept. 15	RICE
Sept. 22	at Illinois
Sept. 29	at Virginia
Oct. 6	UNLV
Oct. 20	IDAHO
Oct. 27	at New Mexico State
Nov. 3	UTSA
Nov. 10	at Texas State
Nov. 17	UTAH STATE
Nov. 24	at San Jose State

2011 RESULTS

L	at Southern Miss	17-19
W	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	48-42
L	HOUSTON	34-35
L	at Mississippi State	20-26
L	HAWAII	26-44
W	at Idaho	24-11
W	at Utah State	24-17
W	SAN JOSE STATE	38-28
W	at Fresno State	41-21
W	at Mississippi	27-7
W	at Nevada	24-20
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	44-0
	Pointsettia Bowl	
L	vs. TCU	24-31

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.1	42
Rushing	146.2	70
Passing	248.4	45
Total	394.6	51
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.2	41
Rushing	127.4	29
Pass	249.1	91
Total	376.5	57
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 11	+ 0.85	13

RANKING

82 UTAH STATE | AGGIES

WAC rank: 2 | Record:7-6 | WAC record: 5-2 (2nd) | Stadium: Romney Stadium (25,513)

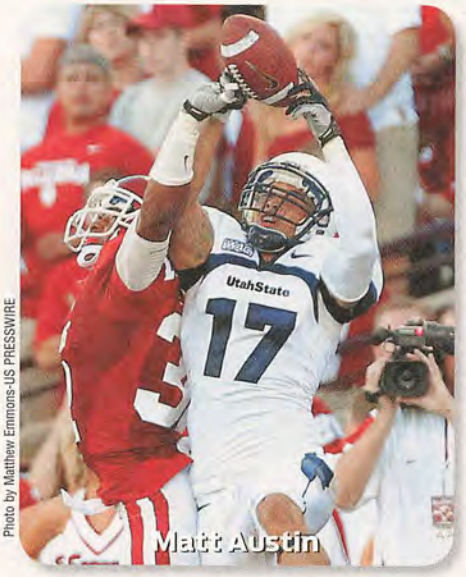


Photo by Matthew Emmons-US PRESSWIRE

"It's an exciting time for Aggie football. We want to keep the momentum going that we gained with the bowl game last season, and we are all anxious to get rolling."
— Coach Gary Andersen

AGGIES at a GLANCE

COACH: Gary Andersen — At Utah State: 15-22, 3 years; **OVERALL:** 19-29, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Wells
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Aranda

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1997, Big West co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Chuckie Keeton, QB Adam Kennedy, RB Kerwynn Williams, WR Matt Austin, C Tyler Larsen, DT Al Lapuaho

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Aggies have developed an exciting offense with a powerful running game and terrific speed. The unit should be dynamic again with experience on the offensive line and at quarterback.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense produced only 15 turnovers last year and must do better even without its top two playmakers. The offense also lost significant star power in two tailbacks who combined for 2,387 rushing yards and 34 total touchdowns last year.

OFFENSE

The Aggies return five starters, including three linemen, from an offense that set school records for total yards (5,945), rushing yards (3,675), points (437) and touchdowns (60).

The three returning linemen — All-WAC center Tyler Larsen (25), right guard Eric Schultz (19) and right tackle Oscar Molina-Sanchez (20) — have combined for 64 career starts.

Senior running back Kerwynn Williams (6.7 yards per carry) will try to replace WAC Offensive Player of the Year Robert Turbin. Senior Matt Austin (34 catches, six TDs) was the team's leading receiver last year.

Quarterback is both one of the team's top question marks and strengths.

Sophomore Chuckie Keeton started the first eight games last year as a true freshman, producing 15 total touchdowns before getting hurt. Senior Adam Kennedy replaced him and went 5-1 while completing 69.1 percent of his passes and throwing for 11 touchdowns.

Quarterbacks coach Matt Wells was elevated to offensive coordinator in the offseason, replacing Colorado State-bound Dave Baldwin.

DEFENSE

The Aggies' 3-4 defense allowed 366.2 yards per game last season, the fewest since 1998.

Six starters return, but there's a gaping hole in the tackles chart — departed linebackers Bobby Wagner and Kyle Gallagher combined for 247 tackles last season. Those two also combined for three of the team's anemic four interceptions.

The backbone of this defense could be the secondary, with three returning starters — safety McKade Brady (86 tackles, six pass breakups,) and cornerbacks Nevin Lawson and Jumanne Robertson. Lawson and Robertson combined to break up 22 passes.

Senior end Al Lapuaho is the only returning starter on the line, but he's joined by five other letterwinners. Linebackers Tavaris McMillian (7.5 tackles for loss) and Bojay Filimoeatu (11 tackles for loss) are playmakers.

Coach Gary Andersen ran the defense last year in an attempt to get the Aggies on track, but he hired former Hawaii coordinator Dave Aranda to take over this year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Returning kicker Josh Thompson was just 6 of 10 on field-goal attempts last season. Punter Tyler Bennett returns — and he was impressive last year, with a 43.8-yard average. Williams, the tailback, holds the WAC record for career kickoff-return yards.

OVERVIEW

The Aggies might have turned a corner as a program last season, when they won five consecutive games to close the regular season, including four by scoring with less than one minute on the clock. That produced the first bowl berth in 14 years — a game the Aggies lost in painful fashion, allowing a touchdown to Ohio with 13 seconds left in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl. The Aggies hope to use the confidence they gained late in the year — and perhaps the frustration of that final loss — to make a run at their first WAC title.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Kyler Fackrell: The 6-5, 236-pound redshirt freshman used an impressive spring to emerge as a possible starter at outside linebacker. He played linebacker, wide receiver and quarterback in high school.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**16**	**Chuckie Keeton***	**6-2**	**198**	**So.**
RB	25	Kerwynn Williams	5-9	193	Sr.
WR	80	Chuck Jacobs	6-0	178	Sr.
WR	8	Travis Reynolds	6-0	179	Jr.
WR	**4**	**Matt Austin***	**6-2**	**200**	**Sr.**
TE	81	Kellen Bartlett	6-2	250	Sr.
LT	74	Kyle Whimpey	6-5	287	So.
LG	54	Jamie Markosian	6-2	298	Jr.
C	**58**	**Tyler Larsen***	**6-4**	**308**	**Jr.**
RG	**66**	**Eric Schultz***	**6-4**	**304**	**Jr.**
RT	**67**	**Oscar Molina-Sanchez***	**6-5**	**297**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**77**	**Al Lapuaho***	**6-3**	**289**	**Sr.**
NG	70	Travis Seefeldt	6-2	296	Fr.
DE	40	Connor Williams	6-3	266	Jr.
LB	**16**	**Tavaris McMillian***	**6-2**	**231**	**So.**
LB	51	Jake Doughty	6-0	227	Jr.
LB	52	Kyler Fackrell	6-5	236	Fr.
LB	**55**	**Bojay Filimoeatu***	**6-2**	**256**	**Sr.**
CB	**13**	**Jumanne Robertson***	**5-11**	**181**	**Sr.**
CB	**1**	**Nevin Lawson***	**5-10**	**184**	**Jr.**
SS	21	Brian Suite	6-3	207	So.
FS	**36**	**McKade Brady***	**5-11**	**198**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**19**	**Josh Thompson***	**5-9**	**185**	**Jr.**
P	**41**	**Tyler Bennett***	**5-11**	**216**	**Sr.**

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 7	UTAH
Sept. 15	at Wisconsin
Sept. 22	at Colorado State
Sept. 29	UNLV
Oct. 5	at BYU
Oct. 13	at San Jose State
Oct. 20	NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 27	at UTSA
Nov. 3	TEXAS STATE
Nov. 17	at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 24	IDAHO

2011 RESULTS

L	at Auburn	38-42
W	WEBER STATE	54-17
L	COLORADO STATE	34-35
L	at BYU	24-27
W	WYOMING	63-19
L	at Fresno State	21-31
L	LOUISIANA TECH	17-24
W	at Hawaii	35-31
W	SAN JOSE STATE	34-33
W	at Idaho (OT)	49-42
W	NEVADA	21-17
W	at New Mexico State	24-21
	Famous Idaho Potato Bowl	
L	vs. Ohio	23-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.6	23
Rushing	282.7	6
Passing	174.6	97
Total	457.3	20
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.9	68
Rushing	127.8	31
Pass	238.5	76
Total	366.2	50
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-9	-0.69	106

RANKING

92 SAN JOSE STATE | SPARTANS

WAC rank: 3 Record:5-7 WAC record: 3-4 (T-4th) Stadium: Spartan Stadium (30,456)

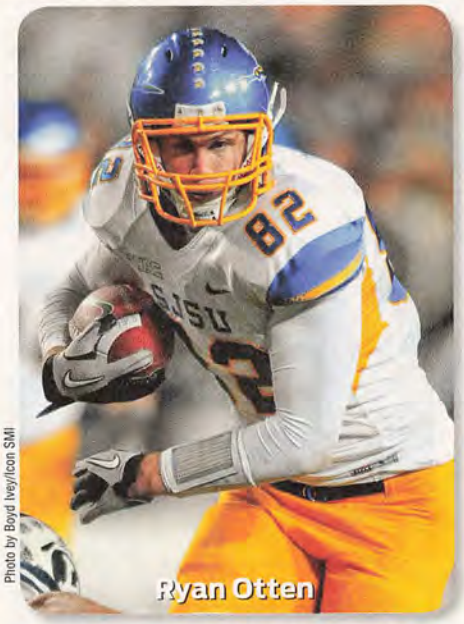


Photo by Boyd Ivey/Icon SMI

"We have some good options. It's mostly a matter of figuring out who we're going to put where." — Offensive line coach Gary Bernardi

SPARTANS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mike MacIntyre — At SJSU and overall: 6-19, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Lindgren
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Kent Baer

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1991, Big West co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2006, New Mexico
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB De'Leon Eskridge, WR Jabari Carr, OT David Quessenberry, TE Ryan Otten, DT Travis Raciti, DE Travis Johnson, LB Keith Smith

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Spartans have one of the most talent groups of receivers in the WAC (Carr, Noel Grigsby and Chandler Jones) and a big-play tight end. Quessenberry is a first-rate left tackle for the quarterback's blind side. The defensive line is stout and the linebacking unit is deep at every position.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Quarterback, quarterback and, um, quarterback: There are significant questions about every candidate. The offensive line features three new starters; the retooled secondary must replace all-league safety Duke Ihenacho and the kicking game needs consistency.

OFFENSE

The outlook for San Jose State changed dramatically over the winter when quarterback Tate Forcier quit school. The mercurial Michigan transfer was expected to lead SJSU in 2012; his departure created a void at the position.

In response, the Spartans signed junior college transfer David Fales, a former Nevada reserve with mobility and experience in the option offense that SJSU prefers. After a slow start, he appeared to take control of the competition when spring practice ended. Dasmen Stewart and Blake Jurich are also in the hunt for the job.

The Spartans will have depth at running back with Minnesota transfer De'Leon Eskridge, veteran David Freeman — he started his career at Washington — and versatile Tyler Ervin, who might be used at cornerback.

They're in fine shape at tight end, with first-team All-WAC performer Ryan Otten (52 catches last year), and are four-deep at receiver.

All-league left tackle David Quessenberry anchors a line that is in mild transition. SJSU also lost savvy play-caller John DeFilippo, who took a similar position with the Oakland Raiders. He was replaced by Brian Lindgren, formerly of Northern Arizona.

DEFENSE

San Jose State should reap the benefits of starting a bevy of young players the past two years due to injuries and roster holes.

While the Spartans officially return just five defensive starters, the reality is that 10 positions have players with significant game experience. The line features two of the best at their position in the league: end Travis Johnson (19 career sacks) and high-motor tackle Travis Raciti, who moves like an end despite his 286-pound frame.

Junior Keith Smith, a tackling machine (220 in two years), leads a linebacking unit that's deep and athletic. Look for Vince Buhagiar, who started in 2010 as a true freshman, to handle duties at middle linebacker.

The secondary must replace all-league safety Duke Ihenacho. There's no way to sugarcoat the impact of his departure, but Cullen Newsome was solid in spot duty last year, and James Orth is a veteran at the other safety spot.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Harrison Waid wasn't ready for the placekicking duties when thrust into action as a freshman in 2010. He needs to be sharp this season with the departure of Jens Alvernick, who connected on 18 of 25 field-goal attempts last year. Waid will have double duty; he's a more-than-adequate punter (42.8 yards per game).

Tyler Ervin gives SJSU a game-changer on kickoff returns (24 yards per return, one touchdown last year), but the punt return game must be improved.

OVERVIEW

A deeper, more talented roster — especially on the defensive line — combined with turnover within the WAC presents San Jose State with an opportunity: The Spartans should be one of the top teams in the revamped league. Given consistent quarterback play, SJSU could compete for the conference title and its first bowl berth since 2006.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB David Fales: The junior began his career at Nevada behind Colin Kaepernick, then spent two years at Monterey Peninsula College before joining SJSU in time for spring practice. Fales possesses good mobility and throws a crisp ball. It would be a mild surprise if he's not the starter in Week 1.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	David Fales	6-3	220	Jr.
RB	4	David Freeman	5-8	202	Sr.
WR	**22**	**Jabari Carr***	**6-0**	**180**	**So.**
WR	**89**	**Chandler Jones***	**5-11**	**174**	**Jr.**
WR	**23**	**Noel Grigsby***	**5-11**	**175**	**Jr.**
TE	**82**	**Ryan Otten***	**6-5**	**245**	**Sr.**
LT	**76**	**David Quessenberry***	**6-6**	**291**	**Sr.**
LG	74	Ryan Jones	6-4	292	Jr.
C	54	Reuben Hasani	6-3	284	Jr.
RG	**75**	**Nicholas Kaspar***	**6-4**	**284**	**Jr.**
RT	79	Jon Meyer	6-5	275	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**43**	**Travis Johnson***	**6-3**	**244**	**Sr.**
DT	**90**	**Travis Raciti***	**6-5**	**286**	**So.**
DT	97	Anthony Larceval	6-2	284	Jr.
DE	96	Marcus Howard	6-2	300	So.
LB	**31**	**Keith Smith***	**6-2**	**229**	**Jr.**
LB	36	Vince Buhagiar	6-4	237	Jr.
LB	34	Derek Muaava	6-0	235	So.
CB	**25**	**Ronnie Yell***	**5-10**	**188**	**Sr.**
CB	20	Tyler Ervin	5-10	176	So.
S	39	Cullen Newsome	5-10	207	Sr.
S	**81**	**James Orth***	**6-2**	**206**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	10	Harrison Waid	6-1	173	Jr.
P	**10**	**Harrison Waid***	**6-1**	**173**	**Jr.**

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Stanford
Sept. 8	UC Davis
Sept. 15	COLORADO STATE
Sept. 22	at San Diego State
Sept. 29	at Navy
Oct. 13	UTAH STATE
Oct. 20	at UTSA
Oct. 27	TEXAS STATE
Nov. 3	at Idaho
Nov. 10	at New Mexico State
Nov. 17	BYU
Nov. 24	LOUISIANA TECH

2011 RESULTS

L	at Stanford	3-57
L	at UCLA	17-27
L	NEVADA	14-17
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	34-24
W	at Colorado State	38-31
L	at BYU	16-29
W	HAWAII	28-27
L	at Louisiana Tech	28-38
L	IDAHO	29-32
L	at Utah State	33-34
W	NAVY	27-24
W	at Fresno State	27-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.5	80
Rushing	101.8	110
Passing	276.8	23
Total	378.7	69
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.3	86
Rushing	204.3	106
Pass	221.3	54
Total	425.7	93
TO MARGIN		
+1	+0.08	49

RANKING

97 NEW MEXICO STATE | AGGIES

WAC rank: 4 Record: 4-9 WAC record: 2-5 (7th) Stadium: Aggie Memorial Stadium (30,343)

Photo by Jesse Johnson-US PRESSWIRE

Andrew Manley

"As we start to prepare for September, I feel real confident we will have a solid football team."
— Coach DeWayne Walker

AGGIES at a GLANCE

COACH: DeWayne Walker — At NMSU and overall: 9-29, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jerry McManus
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Elson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1960, Border Conference
LAST BOWL: 1960, Sun
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 3 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Andrew Manley, WR Austin Franklin, WR Kemonte Bateman, LT Davonte Wallace, RT Andrew Kersten, DE Donte Savage, LB B.J. Adolpho

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Manley is a potential all-league quarterback who averaged nearly 300 yards per game in three starts before tearing his ACL in 2011. Franklin and Bateman can stretch the field and open things up. Savage could be a needed pass rusher, and the schedule is as favorable as it's been in years.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: It's hard to imagine NMSU's offense can survive a Manley injury this fall. The kicking game isn't stable. The team lost its top two rushers, top three receivers and 15 regular starters overall. The defense doesn't have much experience in the secondary.

OFFENSE

Before he tore his ACL in a Week 3 rivalry loss to UTEP, Andrew Manley was as good as any quarterback in the WAC. He averaged 297.3 passing yards in three starts and tossed six touchdowns, including three in a road win at Minnesota.

The offense will be the same, although NMSU is breaking in its fourth coordinator (Jerry McManus) in head coach DeWayne Walker's fourth season. But because of Manley, neither the coaching change nor relative inexperience on offense has anyone panicking.

The bookends on the line — left tackle Davonte Wallace and right tackle Andrew Kersten — could push for All-WAC honors.

Running back Robert Clay started the 2011 season before star Kenny Turner (1,600 all-purpose yards) took over. With Turner gone, this is Clay's job once again, but junior college transfer Akeelie Mustafa will get plenty of touches.

Speedy wide receivers Austin Franklin and Kemonte Bateman combined for 938 yards and seven touchdowns last year despite being options Nos. 4 and 5 in the passing game. Both can stretch the field.

DEFENSE

Defensive end Donte Savage sat out in 2011 (grades) and appeared determined this spring to make it up in his senior year. He likely will be the Aggies' best player on defense, providing a much-needed pass rush for a unit that registered just 18 sacks last year.

The rest of the four-man front, including returning starting defensive tackle Walton Taumoepeau, will be tasked with more of a run-stuffing role after NMSU allowed 218.8 rushing yards per game.

Linebackers B.J. Adolpho and Bryan Bonilla are returning starters, but neither is a star. If junior college transfer Trashaun Nixon plays in the fall as he did in the spring, he could be the best of the bunch starting on the weak side.

The secondary has had a cornerback drafted into the NFL in each of the past two seasons, a rarity for the program. There isn't an NFL player in this group, but safeties Justin Smith (13 tackles in a win over Fresno State last year) and former Ole Miss player Dele Junaid have the potential to be very good.

SPECIAL TEAMS

NMSU lost elite return man Taveon Rogers — who led the nation with three kick returns for scores — but is happy with sophomore speedster Austin Franklin as the replacement.

Jake Capraro averaged less than 40 yards per punt in 2011 and will take a back seat to Australian-born transfer Cayle Chapman-Brown (43.3 yards per punt in junior college). Kicker Tyler Stampler could see local product Brock Baca take his job by season's end.

OVERVIEW

With Manley back, the offense will score, even if it returns only three players who started at least half the time in 2011. The defense, on the other hand, has no depth and, even if it stays healthy, may not have enough talent to win. The WAC is weak, but likely not enough for the Aggies to break a 52-year bowl drought.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Trashaun Nixon: The junior college transfer from Ventura College in California came up with a fumble return for a touchdown and an interception in the team's spring game. With great speed and athleticism, he has breakout potential this fall.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	8	Andrew Manley	6-3	225	So.
RB	2	Robert Clay	5-10	195	Sr.
HB	7	Kevan Walker	6-0	195	Sr.
WR	**13**	**Kemonte Bateman***	**6-1**	**185**	**Sr.**
WR	4	Austin Franklin	6-2	180	So.
TE	80	Perris Scoggins	6-3	250	Jr.
LT	**74**	**Davonte Wallace***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
LG	70	Andy Cunningham	6-4	300	Fr.
C	55	Valerian Ume-Ezeoke	6-2	275	So.
RG	77	Houston Clemente	6-2	285	Fr.
RT	**78**	**Andrew Kersten***	**6-5**	**305**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	52	Donte Savage	6-2	250	Sr.
NT	97	Mark Brown	6-0	290	So.
DT	**92**	**Walton Taumoepeau***	**6-3**	**300**	**Sr.**
DE	91	Kalvin Cruz	6-2	275	Jr.
LB	**12**	**Bryan Bonilla***	**6-1**	**220**	**Jr.**
LB	**36**	**B.J. Adolpho***	**5-11**	**225**	**Sr.**
LB	2	Trashaun Nixon	6-1	225	Jr.
CB	4	Darien Johnson	5-9	180	Jr.
CB	1	Jeremy Harris	6-2	185	Sr.
SS	6	Dele Junaid	6-1	200	Jr.
FS	**8**	**Justin Smith***	**6-2**	**200**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**18**	**Tyler Stampler***	**5-10**	**175**	**Sr.**
P	7	Cayle Champan-Brown	6-5	210	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 08	at Ohio
Sept. 15	at UTEP
Sept. 22	NEW MEXICO
Sept. 29	UTSA
Oct. 06	at Idaho
Oct. 20	at Utah State
Oct. 27	LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 03	at Auburn
Nov. 10	SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 24	BYU
Dec. 01	at Texas State

2011 RESULTS

L	OHIO	24-44
W	at Minnesota	28-21
L	UTEP	10-16
L	at San Jose State	24-34
W	at New Mexico	42-28
W	IDAHO	31-24
L	at Hawaii	34-45
L	NEVADA	34-48
L	at Georgia	16-63
W	FRESNO STATE	48-45
L	at BYU	7-42
L	at Louisiana Tech	0-44
L	UTAH STATE	21-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.5	79
Rushing	125.0	89
Passing	273.1	26
Total	398.1	47
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	36.8	112
Rushing	218.8	107
Pass	243.4	82
Total	462.2	112
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-3	-0.23	80

RANKING

102 IDAHO | VANDALS

WAC rank: 5 | Record: 2-10 | WAC record: 1-6 (8th) | Stadium: Kibbie Dome (16,000)

Justin Veltung

Photo by Tom Smedes/Icon SMI

"We made huge strides this spring; huge strides. Our guys, more than anything, learned to become more mentally strong."
— Offensive coordinator Jason Gesser

VANDALS at a GLANCE

COACH: Robb Akey — At Idaho and overall: 19-43, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jason Gesser
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Mark Criner

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998, Big West
LAST BOWL: 2009, Humanitarian
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 4 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Dominique Blackman, RB Ryan Bass, WR Justin Veltung, WR Mike Scott, DE Benson Mayowa, LB Robert Siavii, CB Aaron Grymes, S Gary Walker

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense improved last season and received boosts from unforeseen sources after Siavii went down with injury. The Vandals are deep and experienced at almost every position on defense. If the offense can keep them off the field a little more, they should improve again.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Is Gesser ready to be coordinator? Can the quarterback problem be solved? Will the offensive line mature fast enough? Can Ryan Bass stay healthy? The good news is things can't get much worse than the 2011 offense that ranked 107th nationally in scoring.

OFFENSE

The Vandals had to do something to shake things up after averaging just 20.3 points per game. They did just that by bringing in somebody who knows a few things about getting into the end zone.

Idaho is relying on new coordinator Jason Gesser, who was a record setting quarterback while at Washington State. He has had success as a player, but is something of an unknown as a coach. Gesser was promoted following one season as UI's running backs coach, just one year removed from coaching high school football.

It is a risk, but a calculated one. Gesser will be eased into the role with the support of two long-time college assistants — receivers coach Mike Levenseller, who coached alongside head coach Robb Akey when both were at WSU, and Gordy Shaw, a veteran of college sidelines since 1978.

All three have decisions to make. Idaho's quarterback will either be transfer Dominique Blackman or junior Taylor Davis, who started three games and played in seven during the 2011 campaign.

Three starters on the line are gone, as well as two of the Vandals' three leading receivers. Running back Ryan Bass is healthy after injury and illness limited him to just 44 carries last year.

DEFENSE

The defense was better than expected a year ago and will get a big boost with the return of an injured difference maker who missed all of 2011.

Linebacker Robert Siavii is back after a spring knee injuries halted his plans. Siavii led Idaho in tackles in 2010 and finished second in tackles for loss and sacks.

Linebacker Sua Tuala had an outstanding spring camp and is expected to join Siavii and fellow senior Homer Mauga as starting linebackers, a position that should be the Vandals' deepest.

Seniors Aaron Grymes and Gary Walker at corner and safety, respectively, lead a relatively deep and experienced secondary. Strong safety Trey Williams and corner Tracy Carter didn't start last year but combined for action in 21 games.

The defensive front, or 'War Daddies' in Akey's vernacular, also brings back a lot of experience. Led by standouts like senior end Benson Mayowa and junior tackle Quayshawne Buckley, the Vandals enjoy ample depth and pretty good size on the line.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Trey Farquhar and punter Bobby Cowan are back to follow up great 2011 campaigns. Cowan, a senior, was second in the nation in punting average (46.4) and was a Football Writers Association of America All-American. Farquhar, also a senior, connected on 10 of 15 field-goal attempts for the conference's third-best percentage.

OVERVIEW

The Vandals were dreadful on offense last year, and they'll have to improve while a young line and a new quarterback find their ways. The Vandals will win more games than last season, if only because of a weaker league. Just how many depends on how quickly the offense can adjust to schemes implemented by Gesser.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Dominique Blackman: The starting quarterback job seems his to lose. At the very least, his big arm and imposing size will give opposing defenses something to think about. He originally signed with Washington, went to junior college, redshirted at Old Dominion ... and now, Idaho.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	Dominique Blackman	6-5	255	Jr.
RB	5	Ryan Bass	5-10	214	Sr.
FB	40	Henry Asuega	6-0	273	Sr.
WR	**18**	**Mike Scott***	**5-11**	**198**	**Sr.**
WR	1	Justin Veltung	5-11	182	Sr.
TE	**81**	**Taylor Elmo***	**6-4**	**260**	**Jr.**
LT	60	Cody Elenz	6-4	284	Fr.
LG	68	Guy Reynolds Jr.	6-2	316	Jr.
C	**74**	**Mike Marboe***	**6-2**	**301**	**So.**
RG	**52**	**A.J. Jones***	**6-1**	**281**	**Sr.**
RT	77	Jordan Johnson	6-6	319	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	91	Vince Keener	6-4	262	Jr.
DT	99	Jason Davis	6-6	292	So.
DT	**57**	**Quayshawne Buckley***	**6-4**	**305**	**Jr.**
DE	**10**	**Benson Mayowa***	**6-3**	**252**	**Sr.**
LB	**1**	**Robert Siavii***	**6-1**	**227**	**Sr.**
LB	35	Sua Tuala	6-0	226	Sr.
LB	19	Homer Mauga	6-0	230	Sr.
CB	**6**	**Aaron Grymes***	**5-11**	**183**	**Sr.**
CB	14	Tracy Carter	5-11	178	Jr.
SS	7	Trey Williams	6-2	206	Jr.
FS	**8**	**Gary Walker***	**6-0**	**203**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**21**	**Trey Farquhar***	**6-1**	**182**	**Sr.**
P	**13**	**Bobby Cowan***	**6-5**	**229**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 8	at Bowling Green
Sept. 15	at LSU
Sept. 22	WYOMING
Sept. 29	at North Carolina
Oct. 6	NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 13	at Texas State
Oct. 20	at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 3	SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 10	at BYU
Nov. 17	UTSA
Nov. 24	at Utah State

2011 RESULTS

L	BOWLING GREEN	15-32
W	NORTH DAKOTA	44-14
L	at Texas A&M	7-37
L	FRESNO STATE	24-48
L	at Virginia (OT)	20-21
L	LOUISIANA TECH	11-24
L	at New Mexico State	24-31
L	HAWAII	14-16
W	at San Jose State	32-29
L	at BYU	7-42
L	UTAH STATE (OT)	42-49
L	at Nevada	3-56

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.3	107
Rushing	113.3	102
Passing	188.3	88
Total	301.5	111
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.3	98
Rushing	158.6	65
Pass	278.3	111
Total	436.8	101
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-7	-0.58	99

RANKING

122 TEXAS STATE | BOBCATS

WAC Rank : 6 FCS Independent: Record: 6-6 Stadium: Jim Wacker Field at Bobcat Stadium (30,000)

Shaun Rutherford

Photo by Jerod Foster/Icon SMI

"We're not jumping in with our toes. We're jumping in with both feet with this schedule."

—Coach Dennis Franchione

BOBCATS at a GLANCE

COACH: Dennis Franchione — At Texas State: 18-15, 3 years; **OVERALL:** 193-107-2, 26 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Jeff Conway, Mike Schultz
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Craig Naivar

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008, Southland
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Shaun Rutherford, QB Tyler Arndt, RB Marcus Curry, RB Terrence Franks, TE/DE Chase Harper, LB Joplo Bartu, CB Darryl Morris, FS Xavier Daniels

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Texas State bases its offense around Curry and Franks, but will get Harper and WR Isaiah Battle involved as well. Morris and Mager compare favorably to the best cornerback duos in the WAC.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Bobcats got a bit predictable on offense in 2011 and were forced into a lot of third-and-long situations. Texas State needs to get better at stopping the run (4.5 yards per carry) and must get pressure on the quarterback ... but there are no easy personnel answers.

OFFENSE

Make no mistake about it; Texas State is a run-based team.

The Bobcats rushed for 195.3 yards per game last season. If Texas State was in the Football Bowl Subdivision, that effort would have ranked coach Dennis Franchione's bunch 28th in the nation.

The Bobcats have a knockout-worthy one-two punch at running back with senior Marcus Curry and sophomore Terrence Franks. Curry and Franks combined to rush for 1,500 yards and 12 touchdowns in 2011.

While Curry provides a more versatile option out of the backfield with his ability to run between the tackles and catch passes, Franks is the true threat. Franks broke off six runs of 20 yards or more last season, including a pair of scores from 70-plus yards. Against Southeastern Louisiana, Franks rushed for 234 yards, the eighth-best single-game total in school history.

Curry and Franks will run behind a line that lost three four-year starters, including former FCS All-American guard D.J. Hall. Still, Franchione said he believes this line will be better than the last.

Texas State's new-look group up front should be helped by three solid tight ends who have a block-first mentality. Senior Chase Harper anchors the group.

The Bobcats will once again use a two-quarterback attack with senior Shaun Rutherford and junior Tyler Arndt.

Texas State is unproven at receiver, but junior Isaiah Battle will take some pressure off the group if he lives up to his potential.

DEFENSE

The Bobcats' 4-2-5 defense is anchored by the secondary. Texas State returns four starters from the group. Safeties Xavier Daniels and Aaron Matthews were the team's top two tacklers.

The Bobcats will be solid at cornerback with senior Darryl Morris and sophomore Craig Mager. The duo combined for 18 break-ups and 20 passes defended in 2011.

Texas State might have a consistent rotation at linebacker with the addition of redshirt freshman Joshua Robinson, two junior college transfers in David Mayo and Damion McMiller and true freshman Jerrid Jeter-Gilmon. Senior Joplo Bartu is the best of the batch.

The Bobcats will be hard-pressed to replace graduated defensive end Michael Ebbitt, who finished with 11.5 sacks, just shy of the school record (12).

Franchione hopes junior Jordan Norfleet and junior college transfer Thomas Evans can provide pressure off the edges. Redshirt freshman Justin Booth should help as well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore Will Johnson will handle kicking and punting duties for Texas State. Nebraska transfer Jason Dann might see time at kicker should Johnson struggle.

OVERVIEW

This will be the Bobcats' first season at the FBS level, and it's not going to be easy. Texas State doesn't have an easy schedule, but it's helped out by having four of its first six games at home. If the Bobcats get production from the quarterback position — and pressure the other guys' passer — they should be competitive in several games.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Rodney Woodland: With the Bobcats lacking at wide receiver, Woodland can step right in and produce. Woodland, a junior college transfer, has speed to burn, possibly providing the home-run threat Texas State covets.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**17**	**Shaun Rutherford***	**6-0**	**185**	**Sr.**
RB	**28**	**Marcus Curry***	**5-11**	**210**	**Sr.**
WR	13	Andy Erickson	5-10	175	Jr.
WR	**6**	**Isaiah Battle***	**5-11**	**200**	**Jr.**
WR	3	Cody Matthews	6-4	180	Jr.
TE	**88**	**Chase Harper***	**6-5**	**260**	**Sr.**
QT	55	Adley Eshraghipour	6-4	265	Sr.
QG	75	Mike Yoder	6-5	280	Jr.
C	66	Matt Freeman	6-2	264	Fr.
SG	**72**	**Charlie Will Tuttle***	**6-2**	**285**	**So.**
ST	**56**	**Thaddeus Watkins***	**6-5**	**285**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
LE	99	Thomas Evans	6-4	250	Jr.
NT	**71**	**Deshun Williams***	**5-11**	**300**	**Jr.**
DT	98	Kamu Taulelei	6-2	280	Jr.
RE	**97**	**Jordan Norfleet***	**6-2**	**235**	**Jr.**
LB	44	Joshua Robinson	5-11	235	Fr.
LB	**31**	**Joplo Bartu***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
CB	**2**	**Darryl Morris***	**5-11**	**185**	**Sr.**
CB	**25**	**Craig Mager***	**5-11**	**181**	**So.**
S	**15**	**Jason McLean***	**5-11**	**195**	**Sr.**
SS	26	Phillip Benning	6-0	175	Jr.
FS	**18**	**Xavier Daniels***	**6-0**	**165**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**38**	**Will Johnson***	**6-3**	**192**	**So.**
P	38	Will Johnson	6-3	192	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Houston
Sept. 8	TEXAS TECH
Sept. 22	STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 29	NEVADA
Oct. 6	at New Mexico
Oct. 13	IDAHO
Oct. 27	at San Jose State
Nov. 3	at Utah State
Nov. 10	LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 17	at Navy
Nov. 24	at UTSA
Dec. 1	NEW MEXICO STATE

2011 RESULTS

L	at Texas Tech	10-50
L	at Wyoming	10-45
W	TARLETON STATE	38-28
W	at S.F. Austin	35-26
W	NICHOLLS STATE	38-12
W	at McNeese State	21-14
W	LAMAR	46-21
L	at Southeastern Louisiana	28-38
L	NORTHWESTERN STATE	10-23
W	PRAIRIE VIEW A&M	34-26
L	at Central Arkansas	22-23
L	SAM HOUSTON STATE	14-36

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.5	N/A
Rushing	195.3	N/A
Passing	149.9	N/A
Total	345.2	N/A
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.5	N/A
Rushing	164.7	N/A
Pass	235.0	N/A
Total	399.7	N/A
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-7	-0.58	N/A

*2011 statistics not recognized by NCAA

RANKING

124 UTSA | ROADRUNNERS

WAC rank: 7 | Record: 4-6, FCS Independent | Stadium: Alamodome (65,000)

Photo by John Albright / Icon SMI

"If you told me right now we could put .500 in the bank, I wouldn't do that. I want to play it out."
— Coach Larry Coker

ROADRUNNERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Larry Coker — At UTSA: 4-6, 1 year
OVERALL: 64-21, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Brown
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Neal Neathery

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 23; 11 offense, 10 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Eric Soza, WR Kam Jones, OG Scott Inskeep, DE Marlon Smith, LB Steven Kurfehs, LB Brandon Reeves, CB Darrien Starling

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Wide receiver offers an abundance of playing styles and options, most notably Jones' ability to make things happen in the open field. The Roadrunners love their rotation at defensive tackle. Linebackers Kurfehs and Reeves are smart, aggressive and disciplined.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Despite a year of experience and another recruiting class, the Roadrunners are still dangerously thin in many areas. Offensive line and the secondary are especially susceptible to injuries. The Roadrunners have yet to identify an every-down tailback, and special teams might again be a major issue.

OFFENSE

Eric Soza was generally solid as a first-year starter, but the Roadrunners need more consistency out of their junior quarterback as they make the transition to FBS status.

Soza, who completed 172 of 307 passes for 2,148 yards with 14 touchdowns and nine interceptions last season, appears to have risen to spring challenges from redshirt freshman Ryan Polite and junior college transfer Tucker Carter, both of whom had good springs.

Running back remains a potential issue, but the Roadrunners were pleased with a solid, if unspectacular, spring from David Glasco II. In comparison, wide receiver is brimming with talent, most notably the open-field abilities of Kam Jones.

The offensive line, despite severely lacking in depth or experience, held up surprisingly well last season. While still thin, the unit will be fortified by the addition of two junior college transfers — guard Armando Alvarez and tackle Mason Russell.

Tying everything together will be rookie coordinator Kevin Brown, who moves from coaching tight ends to replace the departed Travis Bush. Brown seems to favor a no-frills style, and colleagues rave about his maturity and organizational skills at the age of 31.

DEFENSE

The Roadrunners have multiple playmakers at every level, but potential problems became apparent during spring camp. Specifically, UTSA showed a feeble pass rush despite the implementation of more blitzes, and it has a lack of depth in the secondary.

When he is on his game, former basketball player Marlon Smith is a pass-rushing, ball-swatting terror on the end. He needs more consistency, however. The Roadrunners are pleased with their four-man rotation at tackle, any of whom could start.

The linebacker spots are in the able hands of Brandon Reeves and Steven Kurfehs. Backup Cody Rogers steadily improved last season, especially after stepping in when Kurfehs was injured late in the year. But health has been an issue.

The secondary could be a major problem. Erik Brown and Darrien Starling are solid at cornerback, but beyond the duo, there's an alarming drop-off in talent. Likewise, coordinator Neal Neathery wants even more depth at safety despite the makings of a solid five-man rotation.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Safeties coach Perry Eliano will take over supervision after an inconsistent year.

Kicker Sean Ianno was generally solid, converting on 11 of 18 field-goal attempts with a long of 48 yards. He did have two blocked, however, including a potential game-winner against South Alabama.

UTSA made a bold gamble by giving punter Josh Ward a full ride. It looks like a poor investment so far, as Ward was injured and then outkicked by Kristian Stern, who holds the top spot entering fall camp.

OVERVIEW

The Roadrunners had a respectable inaugural season, winning four games and hanging in against several solid opponents, including a loss at FCS finalist Sam Houston State. There's reason for optimism, with the university putting resources into the team, which is in line to move to Conference USA after spending 2012 in the WAC.

TOP NEWCOMER

DB Cody Berry: The junior college transfer turned heads with a pair of interceptions in the spring game. That was good enough for the New Orleans native to jump atop the depth chart at one of UTSA's three safety positions.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	8	**Eric Soza***	6-1	200	Jr.
RB	11	**David Glasco II***	5-10	195	So.
WR	84	**Brandon Freeman***	5-10	155	So.
WR	1	**Kam Jones***	6-0	190	So.
WR	18	Kenny Harrison	5-9	160	So.
TE	82	Jeremiah Moeller	6-3	220	Jr.
LT	74	**Drew Phillips***	6-5	265	So.
LG	79	**Scott Inskeep***	6-5	295	So.
C	55	**Nate Leonard***	6-1	280	So.
RG	68	**Cody Harris***	6-5	280	So.
RT	76	Josh Walker	6-4	305	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	45	**Marlon Smith***	6-6	225	Sr.
DT	61	**Richard Burge***	6-4	270	So.
DT	58	**Ferrington Macon***	6-0	290	So.
DE	45	**William Ritter***	6-2	225	Jr.
LB	53	**Brandon Reeves***	5-10	220	Sr.
LB	44	**Steven Kurfehs***	6-3	225	Jr.
CB	24	**Darrien Starling***	5-9	180	So.
CB	17	**Erik Brown***	5-10	185	Jr.
SS	25	**Mauricio Sanchez***	6-0	180	So.
SS	10	Cody Berry	6-1	210	Jr.
FS	14	Triston Wade	6-0	160	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	92	**Sean Ianno***	6-4	190	So.
P	95	Kristian Stern	6-0	175	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at South Alabama
Sept. 8	TEXAS A&M-COMMERCE
Sept. 15	at Georgia State
Sept. 22	N.W. OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 29	at New Mexico State
Oct. 13	at Rice
Oct. 20	SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 27	UTAH STATE
Nov. 3	at Lousiana Tech
Nov. 10	McNEESE STATE
Nov. 17	at Idaho
Nov. 24	TEXAS STATE

2011 RESULTS

W	NORTHEASTERN STATE	31-3
L	MCMURRY	21-24
L	at Southern Utah	22-45
W	BACONE	54-7
L	at Sam Houston State	7-22
L	SOUTH ALABAMA (2OT)	27-30
L	at UC Davis	17-38
W	GEORGIA STATE(OT)	17-14
L	at McNeese State	21-24
W	MINOT STATE	49-7

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.6	N/A
Rushing	144.8	N/A
Passing	219.7	N/A
Total	364.5	N/A
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.4	N/A
Rushing	126.2	N/A
Pass	212.3	N/A
Total	338.5	N/A
TO MARGIN		
+1	+0.1	N/A

2011 statistics not recognized by NCAA

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SIGNATURE

PICKING **CONFERENCE USA**

New Wave of Quarterbacks Ready To Storm Pass-Happy League

If 2011 was the Year of the Quarterback in Conference USA, what will 2012 be?

It's a difficult question to answer. Gone are Case Keenum (Houston), G.J. Kinne (Tulsa), Austin Davis (Southern Miss) and Dominique Davis (East Carolina). A marquee season for quarterbacks has given way to waiting for stars to emerge.

The dearth of quarterback talent makes picking division champions a bit tricky. So does the loss of high-profile coaches like Houston's Kevin Sumlin and Southern Miss' Larry Fedora.

Despite the exits of Keenum and Sumlin, expect Houston to make a strong run at the West Division crown behind sophomore quarterback David Piland.

The sophomore redshirted in 2011, but was thrown into duty two years ago as a true freshman after a succession of injuries. He performed admirably, which makes him a candidate to go from relative obscurity to a preseason all-league pick.

Piland passed for 2,641 yards and 24 touchdowns in eight games in 2010 after Keenum and backup Cotton Turner were injured early in the season. Piland, who was intercepted 14 times in 2010, sat out last season and witnessed from the sidelines Keenum's assault on the record books.

SMU will be the favorite and Tulsa will be in the hunt, too, as former Nebraska quarterback Cody Green, who played in 17 games with the Cornhuskers, steps in to the starting role.

In the East Division, Marshall and Tulane return the best players at the quarterback position, but UCF gets a slight nod in the East over Marshall, operating under third-year coach Doc Holliday. What makes UCF a favorite is its loaded backfield, an experienced, productive running back tandem of Brynn Harvey and Latavius Murray along with University of Miami transfer Storm Johnson.

UCF coach George O'Leary also has had a knack for recovering from lackluster seasons, and he's coming off one that goes in the "oh-so-close" category. The Knights finished 5-7, but outscored their opponents 325-220 and lost by a touchdown or less in six games.

At Marshall, eight offensive starters are back from a Thundering Herd team that won seven games and beat Florida International in a bowl game.

Marshall has a chance to win the East with a schedule that includes key home games against division favorites UCF and Houston. Among the returnees for the Thundering Herd are quarterback Rakeem Cato, who passed for 2,059 yards and 15 touchdowns, and Aaron Dobson, who caught 49 passes for 12 touchdowns and 668 yards.

— Phil Stukenborg

Conference USA Picks

EAST	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. UCF	Veterans abound. RB Latavius Murray and QB Blake Bortles are key offensive players.	Tough first month with games at Ohio State (Sept. 8) and vs. Missouri (Sept. 29).	UCF lost four of its last six, but only by an average of 4.2 points. Knights can reverse fortunes as East champs.
2. Marshall	WR Aaron Dobson is one of the top players in the conference.	Marshall ranked 11th in the conference in yards per game last season.	Offense should improve for coach Doc Holliday, who will have Herd back in the postseason.
3. Southern Miss	DE Jamie Collins and DB Deron Wilson are two of the league's best defenders.	Southern Miss will be extremely inexperienced at quarterback.	First-year coach Ellis Johnson doesn't have quite enough talent to make division charge right away.
4. East Carolina	ECU set back-to-back school attendance records, topping an average of 50,000 last year.	Pirates have to go to South Carolina, Southern Miss and North Carolina in September.	Losing QB Dominique Davis (3,235 yards passing) too much to overcome in postseason push.
5. UAB	Hiring of ex-Arkansas offensive coordinator Garrick McGee received positive reviews.	It's a challenging September — at South Carolina and Ohio State in successive weekends.	UAB will start slow again and battle to keep from joining Memphis in the bottom of the rankings.
6. Memphis	TCU co-offensive coordinator Justin Fuente replaces Larry Porter, who was 3-21 in two years.	QB Taylor Reed, who started last year as a freshman, left the team.	Fuente will be an improvement, but without much talent, he'll fight to stay out of the cellar.
WEST			
1. SMU	RB Zach Line, an honorable mention All-American, is back after scoring league-high 17 TDs.	Mustangs lost eight offensive starters, including QB J.J. McDermott and WR Cole Beasley.	Line — who was C-USA's only 1,000-yard rusher in 2011 — gives Mustangs a chance to win the West.
2. Tulsa	Tulsa returns its top two tailbacks and two receivers who each amassed at least 850 yards.	Golden Hurricane lost QB G.J. Kinne and three starting offensive linemen.	Tulsa remains a candidate to win the division, with seven defensive starters back, led by safety Dexter McCoil.
3. Houston	Coach Kevin Sumlin departed for Texas A&M, but didn't leave cupboard bare.	NCAA record-setting QB Case Keenum and the league's top two receivers are gone.	Cougars will contend in the West behind new coach Tony Levin and QB David Piland.
4. Tulane	Experienced QB Ryan Griffin and LB Trent Mackey give the Green Wave hope.	First-year coach Curtis Johnson takes over a team that is 31-76 in the past nine years.	Experience at QB and RB (Orleans Darkwa) makes Tulane a middle-of-the-pack possibility.
5. Rice	QB Taylor McHargue and leading receiver Vance McDonald return.	The Owls, who are 23-38 under coach David Bailiff, open against UCLA and Kansas.	There's enough talent here to move up and possibly challenge Houston for third place.
6. UTEP	QB Nick Lamaison and WR Mike Edwards anchor the offense, along with C Eloy Atkinson.	Miners lost MLB Jeremy Springer, the team's top tackler, and S Travaun Nixon (four INTs).	With tough non-conference slate, coach Mike Price is headed for a seventh straight losing season.

Lindy's 2012 ALL C-USA Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM	QB	David Piland	So.	Houston
	RB	Zach Line	Sr.	SMU
	RB	Charles Sims	Jr.	Houston
	WR	Darius Johnson	Sr.	SMU
	WR	Aaron Dobson	Sr.	Marshall
	TE	Luke Willson	Sr.	Rice
	C	Trent Dupy	Sr.	Tulsa
	OL	Jacolby Ashworth	Sr.	Houston
	OL	Joe Duhon	Sr.	Southern Miss
	OL	Theo Goins	Sr.	UCF
	OL	Stetson Burnett	Jr.	Tulsa
	AP	Tracy Lampley	Sr.	Southern Miss
	K	Matt Hogan	Sr.	Houston
DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM	DL	Margus Hunt	Sr.	SMU
	DL	Victor Gray	Jr.	UCF
	DL	Cory Dorris	Sr.	Tulsa
	DL	Jamie Collins	Sr.	Southern Miss
	LB	Trent Mackey	Sr.	Tulane
	LB	Taylor Reed	Sr.	SMU
	LB	Jeremy Grove	So.	East Carolina
	DB	D.J. Hayden	Sr.	Houston
	DB	Bryce Callahan	So.	Rice
	DB	Kemal Ishmael	Sr.	UCF
	DB	Dexter McCoil	Sr.	Tulsa
	P	Ian Campbell	Sr.	UTEP
OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM	QB	Ryan Griffin	Sr.	Tulane
	RB	Orleans Darkwa	Jr.	Tulane
	RB	Trey Watts	Jr.	Tulsa
	WR	Justin Hardy	So.	East Carolina
	WR	Willie Carter	Sr.	Tulsa
	WR	Kevin Wright	So.	Memphis
	C	Jordan Rae	Sr.	UCF
	OL	Chris Hubbard	Sr.	UAB
	OL	Jordan Devey	Sr.	Memphis
	OL	Drew Carroll	So.	Rice
	OL	Will Simmons	Jr.	East Carolina
	AP	Rannell Hall	So.	UCF
	K	Chris Boswell	Jr.	Rice
DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM	DL	Justin Dixon	Jr.	East Carolina
	DL	Dasman McCullum	So.	Southern Miss
	DL	Jeremiah Taylor	Jr.	Marshall
	DL	Torian Pittman	Sr.	SMU
	LB	Shawn Jackson	Jr.	Tulsa
	LB	Cameron Nwosu	Jr.	Rice
	LB	Ja'Gared Davis	Sr.	SMU
	DB	Deron Wilson	Sr.	Southern Miss
	DB	Paul Porras	Jr.	Rice
	DB	Marco Nelson	Jr.	Tulsa
	DB	Ryan Travis	Sr.	Tulane
	P	Tom Hornsey	Jr.	Memphis

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 1	Marshall at West Virginia
Sept. 1	SMU at Baylor
Sept. 8	UCF at Ohio State
Sept. 15	Texas A&M at SMU
Sept. 15	Houston at UCLA
Sept. 29	TCU at SMU
Sept. 29	Houston vs. Rice (Reliant Stadium)
Oct. 6	Boise State at Southern Miss
Oct. 20	Houston at SMU
Oct. 20	Marshall at Southern Miss
Oct. 27	UCF at Marshall
Nov. 3	Houston at East Carolina
Nov. 10	Tulsa at Houston
Nov. 17	Houston at Marshall
Nov. 24	Tulsa at SMU

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Champion
AutoZone Liberty Bowl vs. SEC

C-USA #2
Beef O'Brady's Bowl vs. Big East

C-USA #3
Ticket City Bowl vs. Big Ten

C-USA #4
Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl vs. Mountain West

C-USA #5
R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl vs. Sun Belt

C-USA #6
Sheraton Hawaii Bowl vs. Mountain West

C-USA #7
Military Bowl vs. ACC
(C-USA is secondary selection in 2012)

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Margus Hunt	DL	Sr.	SMU	Ex-world junior discus champ, blocked 8 kicks in first 14 games.
2. Dexter McCoil	DB	Sr.	Tulsa	His 13 career INTs are tied for school record.
3. Aaron Dobson	WR	Sr.	Marshall	Scored 12 TDs in 2011, averaged 13.6 yards per reception.
4. Zach Line	RB	Sr.	SMU	Averaged 122.4 rushing yards, led C-USA RBs with 17 TDs.
5. Willie Carter	WR	Sr.	Tulsa	Averaged 14.2 yards per reception and 79 yards per game.
6. Darius Johnson	WR	Sr.	SMU	C-USA's returning leader in receiving yards per game (86.0).
7. Luke Willson	TE	Sr.	Rice	Scored three TDs in 2011; averaged 10.8 yards per catch.
8. Jamie Collins	DL	Sr.	S. Miss	Had 6.5 sacks in 2011, 19.5 tackles for lost yardage.
9. Orleans Darkwa	RB	Jr.	Tulane	His 13 TDs ranked second among C-USA running backs in 2011.
10. Trent Dupy	C	Sr.	Tulsa	Graded at 90 percent in 2011 opener vs. No. 1 Oklahoma.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Zach Line, RB, SMU	Charles Sims, RB, Houston	Jamie Collins, DL/LB, So. Miss	Storm Johnson, RB, UCF

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Ryan Griffin	Tulane
Strongest arm	David Piland	Houston
Best scrambler	Jonathan Perry	UAB
Coolest in the clutch	Rakeem Cato	Marshall
Toughest to bring down	Zach Line	SMU
Best hands	Luke Willson	Rice
Most dangerous deep threat	Darius Johnson	SMU
Best pass blocker	Jacolby Ashworth	Houston
Best run blocker	Joe Duhon	Southern Miss
Best pass rusher	Jamie Collins	Southern Miss
Best cover corner	Bryce Callahan	Rice
Special teams demon	Tracey Lampley	Southern Miss

RANKING

38 UCF | KNIGHTS

C-USA rank: 1 Record: 5-7 C-USA record: 3-5 (T-4th, East) Stadium: Bright House Networks Stadium (45,301)

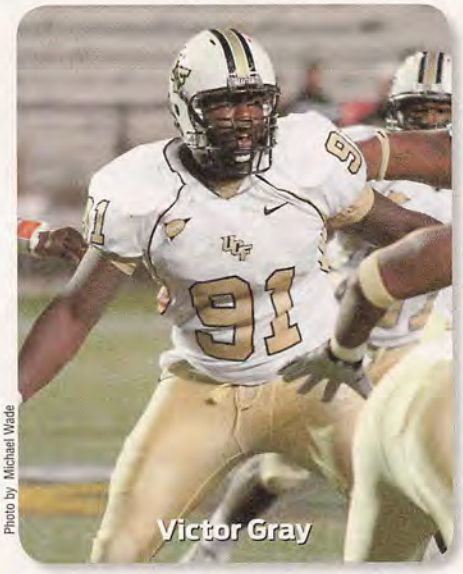


Photo by: Michael Wade

Victor Gray

"That chip on our shoulders is still there. And it will be there until we win a conference championship."
— Senior linebacker Jonathan Davis

KNIGHTS at a GLANCE

COACH: George O'Leary — At UCF: 50-51, 8 years; **OVERALL**: 102-84, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charlie Taaffe
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Fleming

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: 2010, Liberty
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 3 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Blake Bortles, RB Storm Johnson, RB Latavius Murray, WR Quincy McDuffie, DE Troy Davis, DE Victor Gray, LB Ray Shipman, CB A.J. Bouye

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Knights have talent and depth at running back. The defense looks stout all over, but especially in the secondary, where four players with significant starting experience return.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Some issues cleared with the likely return of Jeff Godfrey and J.J. Worton, but will Bortles by looking over his shoulder? New kickers are nearly always question marks, and the Knights have two of them. The first month of the season features the first-ever meetings with Ohio State and Missouri.

OFFENSE

Blake Bortles saw an opportunity and grabbed it.

When Jeff Godfrey left UCF after just two seasons following the disappointing 5-7 mark in 2011, Bortles, who had served as Godfrey's backup at quarterback, used the spring to solidify his position as the starter for 2012.

After spring ball, it was announced that Godfrey was expected to return, likely as a receiver and change-up quarterback. Bortles, who completed 68 percent of his passes for 958 yards in 10 appearances, still goes into fall camp as the starter.

The Knights resolved another question after spring with the news that receiver J.J. Worton, who had been on indefinite suspension, will return. He had 41 receptions as a redshirt freshman in 2011.

Senior Quincy McDuffie (43 catches) and sophomore Josh Reese (30) are the other wide receivers who have something in the way of experience. Rannell Hall, who earned All-Conference USA honors as a kick returner as a freshman in 2011, should see an increased role as a receiver.

Running back is solid with the return of veterans Latavius Murray and Brynn Harvey, who split several starts last season, and newcomer Storm Johnson, a transfer from Miami. Johnson was a big-time recruit out of Georgia, ranked No. 22 overall by ESPN.com after the 2009 season. Johnson rushed 19 times for 199 yards as a freshman at Miami.

The line returns three key veterans, including two-year starter Jordan Rae at center.

DEFENSE

UCF returns several key players from a unit that led C-USA in rushing defense (108.8 yards per game), total defense (303.3), and scoring defense (18.3) in 2011.

One of them is Victor Gray, who played his first two years at tackle but was moved outside to end in the spring. With Troy Davis at the other end, the Knights are set to give opposing quarterbacks major headaches this fall.

Seniors Jonathan Davis and Ray Shipman, a former Florida basketball player, are solid at linebacker, and the Knights return three key players in the secondary in cornerback Brandon Alexander and safeties Kemal Ishmael and Clayton Geathers.

Josh Robinson elected to pass up his final collegiate season to enter the NFL Draft, but A.J. Bouye, a starter before a knee injury cut his season in half, is back at corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore Shawn Moffitt, who hit 5 of 9 field-goal attempts as the backup in 2011, and sophomore Sean Galvin will continue the competition for the primary kicking job.

Jamie Boyle, who has seen brief action in handling some kicking chores over the last three years, is the leading candidate to handle punts in place of the departed David Bohner.

OVERVIEW

If the Knights can find answers at wide receiver, they look to be in position for a big bounce-back season in 2011. The running game should be especially strong, and the defense has the ability to keep them in just about every game.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Breshad Perriman: Perriman, the son of former Miami Hurricane and NFL star Brett Perriman, had a sensational spring after enrolling early. He looks to be a starter as a true freshman when UCF opens with a three-wide receiver set.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	5	Blake Bortles	6-4	221	So.
TB	28	Latavius Murray	6-3	222	Sr.
FB	32	Billy Giovanetti	5-11	230	Sr.
WR	**14**	**Quincy McDuffie***	**5-10**	**178**	**Sr.**
WR	80	Josh Reese	6-1	176	So.
TE	84	Justin Tukes	6-5	246	So.
LT	72	Torrian Wilson	6-4	306	So.
LG	**68**	**Theo Goins***	**6-4**	**317**	**Sr.**
C	**73**	**Jordan Rae***	**6-2**	**275**	**Sr.**
RG	63	Jordan McCray	6-4	310	Jr.
RT	64	Justin McCray	6-4	309	Jr.
DEFENSE					
LE	**58**	**Troy Davis***	**6-2**	**249**	**Sr.**
LT	69	Thomas Niles	6-2	266	Fr.
DT	93	Josh Wofford	6-1	298	Jr.
DE	**91**	**Victor Gray***	**6-4**	**267**	**Jr.**
LB	**11**	**Jonathan Davis***	**5-9**	**202**	**Sr.**
LB	41	Terrance Plummer	6-1	228	So.
LB	46	Ray Shipman	6-5	242	Sr.
CB	37	Brandon Alexander	6-1	183	So.
CB	**21**	**A.J. Bouye***	**6-0**	**186**	**Sr.**
SS	**26**	**Clayton Geathers***	**6-3**	**204**	**So.**
FS	**18**	**Kemal Ishmael***	**5-11**	**206**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	83	Shawn Moffitt	6-0	176	So.
P	43	Jamie Boyle	5-10	194	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Akron
Sept. 8	at Ohio State
Sept. 15	FIU
Sept. 29	MISSOURI
Oct. 4	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 13	SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 20	at Memphis
Oct. 27	at Marshall
Nov. 3	SMU
Nov. 10	at UTEP
Nov. 17	at Tulsa
Nov. 24	UAB

2011 RESULTS

W	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	62-0
W	BOSTON COLLEGE	30-3
L	at FIU	10-17
L	at BYU	17-24
W	MARSHALL	16-6
L	at SMU	17-38
L	at UAB	24-26
W	MEMPHIS	41-0
L	TULSA	17-24
L	at Southern Miss	29-30
L	at East Carolina	31-38
W	UTEP	31-14

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.1	59
Rushing	168.8	43
Passing	238.0	55
Total	406.8	40
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.3	9
Rushing	108.8	16
Pass	194.5	23
Total	303.3	9
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-3	-0.25	82

RANKING

53 SMU | MUSTANGS

C-USA rank: 2 Record: 8-5 C-USA record: 5-3 (3rd, West) Stadium: Gerald J. Ford Stadium (32,000)

Zach Line

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

"We're at a point where we don't fall off much; we're reloading now."
— Defensive coordinator Tom Mason, on SMU's defense

MUSTANGS at a GLANCE

COACH: June Jones — At SMU: 24-28, 4 years
OVERALL: 100-69, 13 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Morrison, Jason Phillips
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Mason

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1984, Southwest Conference co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 3 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Garrett Gilbert, RB Zach Line, WR Darius Johnson, DE Margus Hunt, LB Taylor Reed, LB Ja'Gared Davis

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense had to carry SMU in 2011 and may need to again in 2012, at least early on while the Mustangs break in a young offense. The defense continues to improve under Tom Mason and could have one of the best linebacker corps in the country.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Garrett Gilbert has to learn the run-and-shoot quickly. He'll be under heavy pressure and scrutiny. The offensive line has no returning starters, just some experience and little depth. The kicking game was a bit of a mess last season.

OFFENSE

Quarterback is SMU's main position of intrigue. Garrett Gilbert, the former Texas signal-caller, loaded up on 27 credit hours this spring in order to graduate, which will allow him to play immediately for the Mustangs this fall.

But Gilbert will only have the summer to master June Jones' run-and-shoot, and he hasn't played or practiced since undergoing shoulder surgery last fall, ending his Texas career. Gilbert lost his starting job early in 2011 and struggled as the starter in 2010, passing for 10 touchdowns and 17 interceptions.

SMU will have a new-look offensive line, with all five starters in 2011 graduating, including two who were selected in the NFL Draft.

The Mustangs' young offense, though, will benefit from the return of senior running back Zach Line, Conference USA's leading rusher the past two seasons. He has recovered well from shoulder and foot surgeries.

Gilbert will have an array of fast, athletic receivers to count on, including senior Darius Johnson, who led the Mustangs in receiving yards last season.

Jason Phillips has joined SMU as co-coordinator and receivers coach. Phillips has helped Jones tweak the offense, bringing ideas from Houston, which led the nation in total offense last season.

DEFENSE

This unit, which ranked 27th nationally last season in total defense, will continue to be SMU's strength.

Defensive end Margus Hunt figures to have a breakout season. The senior out of Estonia, who will be playing just his fourth year of football, is coming off a three-sack performance in the BBVA Compass Bowl.

In a 3-4 scheme, SMU's linebackers, led by standouts Taylor Reed and Ja'Gared Davis, are the heart of the attacking defense. Reed led SMU with 101 tackles last season; Davis was first with 12 tackles for loss. Linebacker is the program's deepest position.

The secondary is solid, with J.R. Richardson and Kenneth Acker at cornerback, though who will pair at safety with the returning Ryan Smith won't be determined until fall camp.

SPECIAL TEAMS

SMU struggled in its kicking game in 2011. Returning kicker Chase Hover, a last-minute walk-on, was 8 of 10 on field-goal attempts, with all the makes coming inside 40 yards. But the Mustangs had no one to replace him when he missed games due to illness.

Mike Loftus likely will continue to handle kickoffs and possibly punting. Freshman Derek Longoria was a talented punter in high school, though he is likely to see playing time at linebacker.

OVERVIEW

SMU enters its fifth season under Jones, who recommitted to the job after almost leaving for Arizona State in December. The Mustangs have gone to three straight bowls, winning two, including beating Pittsburgh in the BBVA Compass Bowl last season.

SMU, which will play its final season in Conference USA before moving to the Big East in 2013, won't have a chance to smooth out its rough spots early. The Mustangs have non-conference games against Baylor, Texas A&M and TCU in September.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Garrett Gilbert: He only had time to watch a couple of spring practices, as he was still busy as a student at the University of Texas. But Gilbert was trying to soak up as much as possible because he is expected to take control of the offense upon his transfer. He'll need to regain his confidence after a rough ending at UT.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	N/A	Garrett Gilbert	6-4	207	Jr.
RB	**48**	**Zach Line***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
WR	81	Keenan Holman	6-1	185	Jr.
WR	**3**	**Darius Johnson***	**5-10**	**175**	**Sr.**
WR	**7**	**Der'rikk Thompson***	**5-11**	**185**	**So.**
WR	17	Jeremy Johnson	6-0	175	Jr.
LT	75	Ben Gottschalk	6-5	275	Jr.
LG	78	Jordan Free	6-2	302	Sr.
C	52	Taylor Lasecki	6-3	296	Fr.
RG	63	Blake McJunkin	6-2	300	Sr.
RT	67	Bryan Collins	6-3	313	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	90	Kevin Grenier	6-5	265	Sr.
NG	**91**	**Torlan Pittman***	**6-1**	**295**	**Sr.**
DE	92	Margus Hunt	6-8	295	Sr.
LB	**51**	**Stephon Sanders***	**6-3**	**230**	**So.**
LB	**50**	**Cameron Rogers***	**6-0**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**44**	**Taylor Reed***	**6-0**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**56**	**Ja'Gared Davis***	**6-1**	**225**	**Sr.**
CB	24	J.R. Richardson	5-9	175	So.
CB	**21**	**Kenneth Acker***	**6-0**	**195**	**Jr.**
SS	**20**	**Ryan Smith***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
FS	7	Jay Scott	6-1	205	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**42**	**Chase Hover***	**6-2**	**190**	**Jr.**
P	99	Mike Loftus	6-1	204	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Baylor
Sept. 8	STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 15	TEXAS A&M
Sept. 29	TCU
Oct. 6	at UTEP
Oct. 13	at Tulane
Oct. 20	HOUSTON
Oct. 27	MEMPHIS
Nov. 3	at UCF
Nov. 10	SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 17	at Rice
Nov. 24	TULSA

2011 RESULTS

L	at Texas A&M	14-46
W	UTEP	28-17
W	NORTHWESTERN STATE	40-7
W	at Memphis	42-0
W	at TCU (OT)	40-33
W	UCF	38-17
L	at Southern Miss	3-27
L	at Tulsa	7-38
W	TULANE	45-24
L	NAVY	17-24
L	at Houston	7-37
W	RICE	27-24
	BBVA COMPASS BOWL	
W	vs. Pittsburg	28-6

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.9	69
Rushing	113.8	101
Passing	274.9	24
Total	388.6	58
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.1	40
Rushing	118.3	23
Pass	221.7	55
Total	340.0	27
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-16	-1.23	120

RANKING

64 MARSHALL | THUNDERING HERD

C-USA rank: 3 Record: 7-6 C-USA record: 5-3 (2nd, East) Stadium: Joan C. Edwards Stadium (38,019)

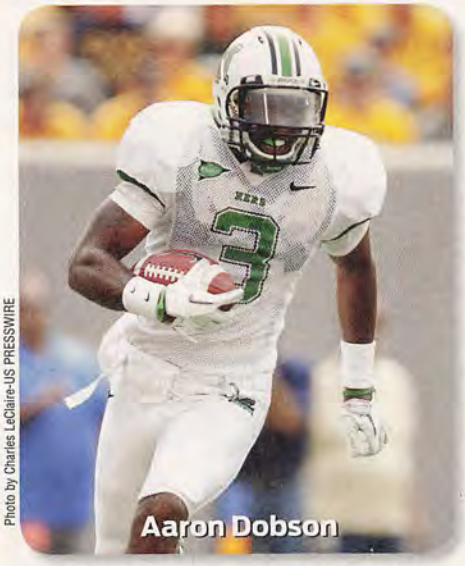


Photo by Charles LeClaire-US PRESSWIRE

"I don't know if they can play or not, but they're fun to look at."
— Coach Doc Holliday, on a more-physically impressive offensive line

THUNDERING HERD at a GLANCE

COACH: Doc Holliday — At Marshall and overall: 12-13, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Legg
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Rippon

LAST LEAGUE TITLE, 2002, MAC
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 8 offense, 5 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Rakeem Cato, RB Tron Martinez, WR Aaron Dobson, LB Devin Arrington, CB Darryl Roberts, S D.J. Hunter

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A trio of senior starting wide receivers should help in the continued development of sophomore Cato, the incumbent at quarterback. There is nary a senior at the back end of the defense, but highly touted youngsters such as Roberts and Hunter will take the pressure off a defensive front that lost Conference USA Defensive Player of the Year Vinny Curry.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: No one behind Cato has thrown a collegiate pass, and a combination of Cato's production and on-field conduct forced the coaching staff to send him to the bench midway through last season. The defense has just one senior — Arrington — and he is shifting from safety to linebacker. There is more depth on that side of the ball, but no marquee player.

OFFENSE

Widespread youth on offense — including using true freshman Rakeem Cato at quarterback — contributed mightily to Marshall finishing next to last in Conference USA in total offense last season.

There is reason for optimism.

Cato is back and doesn't have to worry about being usurped by A.J. Graham, who was dismissed from the program before spring drills began. Cato, who ranked fourth among FBS freshman with 2,059 passing yards last season, flashed an arm in the spring that seemed to be as strong as his personality.

Three of the team's six seniors are at receiver, which should increase Cato's confidence in a quick-snap offense. Aaron Dobson, who stiff-armed NFL temptation after a 12-touchdown junior campaign, is the leader of that group.

The Herd's top two rushers — Tron Martinez and Travon Van — return. They'll be joined in the backfield by two highly touted speedsters — Kevin Grooms and Stew Butler — who sat out the 2011 season as academic non-qualifiers.

The line will miss the stability of tackles C.J. Wood and Ryan Tillman (84 combined starts), but the group is probably deeper overall.

DEFENSE

Somehow, coordinator Chris Rippon will have to nudge his young talent to fill the void left by Vinny Curry, a defensive end who ranked among the nation's leaders in sacks, tackles for a loss and forced fumbles and won the Conference USA Defensive Player of the Year award last season.

Marshall has just one senior on defense: Devin Arrington. He is transitioning to linebacker after filling in at safety last season. D.J. Hunter, a former Tennessee commit, is healthy after a knee injury wiped out his 2011 season and could be an impact player at safety.

Marshall has intriguing players up front, including junior end Jeremiah Taylor. Ra'Shawde Myers impressed in the spring and could start opposite of Taylor. Steve Dillon (originally a USC pledge) and Jarquez Samuel could provide a boost at defensive tackle, along with junior college transfer Ken Smith.

A wild card is A.J. Leggett, a four-star cornerback who picked Marshall after taking official visits to Florida State and Nebraska. If he's eligible, Rippon might have Curry's successor.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Tyler Warner, punter/holder Kase Whitehead and long snapper Tyson Gale all graduated.

Sophomore Justin Haig, who handled all kickoffs last season, is the likely successor to Warner. He was 1 of 2 on field-goal attempts with a long of 24 as a freshman. The punting job is up for grabs, and it wouldn't be surprising if Holliday rustled up another candidate or two before the season opener against West Virginia.

OVERVIEW

Marshall took a step in the right direction in Holliday's second season, going from a five-win season to seven victories and a bowl win against a brutal schedule (three BCS non-conference opponents; five home games). The Herd is light on seniors (six), but Holliday's talent is up, the schedule is lighter and expectations are higher for this still-maturing team.

TOP NEWCOMER

SS D.J. Hunter: He was primed for a starting role as true freshman before suffering a knee injury that kept him out in 2011. He appears ready for big things, putting behind him legal trouble from a few years ago. "He's a great player," safeties coach Todd Hartley said. "He's got all the tools you want."

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**12**	**Rakeem Cato***	**6-1**	**180**	**So.**
RB	**2**	**Tron Martinez***	**5-9**	**202**	**Jr.**
WR	**3**	**Aaron Dobson***	**6-3**	**204**	**Sr.**
WR	**9**	**Antavious Wilson***	**6-1**	**197**	**Sr.**
WR	19	Andre Booker	5-10	176	Sr.
TE	83	Eric Frohnapfel	6-6	223	So.
LT	63	Gage Niemeyer	6-6	305	Jr.
LG	**76**	**Garrett Scott***	**6-4**	**296**	**Jr.**
C	**60**	**Chris Jasperse***	**6-4**	**296**	**So.**
RG	**64**	**John Bruhin***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
RT	77	Jordan Jeffries	6-7	305	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	40	Ra'Shawde Myers	6-3	226	So.
DT	96	Brandon Sparrow	6-4	280	Jr.
DT	**97**	**Marques Aiken***	**6-4**	**270**	**Jr.**
DE	**58**	**Jeremiah Taylor***	**6-4**	**250**	**Jr.**
LB	**11**	**Devin Arrington***	**6-2**	**209**	**Sr.**
LB	**46**	**Jermaine Holmes***	**5-11**	**238**	**So.**
LB	27	Billy Mitchell	6-3	226	Jr.
CB	**39**	**Darryl Roberts***	**5-11**	**177**	**Jr.**
CB	8	Keith Baxter	5-11	190	So.
SS	22	D.J. Hunter	6-0	200	Fr.
FS	31	Evan McKelvey	6-1	205	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	23	Justin Haig	5-8	182	So.
P	93	Austin Dumas	6-1	184	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at West Virginia
Sept. 8	WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 15	OHIO
Sept. 22	at Rice
Sept. 29	at Purdue
Oct. 6	TULSA
Oct. 20	at Southern Miss
Oct. 27	UCF
Nov. 3	MEMPHIS
Nov. 10	at UAB
Nov. 17	HOUSTON
Nov. 24	at East Carolina

2011 RESULTS

L	at West Virginia	13-34
W	SOUTHERN MISS	26-20
L	at Ohio	7-44
L	VIRGINIA TECH	10-30
W	at Louisville	17-13
L	at UCF	6-16
W	RICE	24-20
L	at Houston	28-63
W	UAB	59-14
L	at Tulsa	17-59
W	at Memphis	23-22
W	EAST CAROLINA	34-27
	BEEF 'O' BRADY'S BOWL	
W	vs. FIU	20-10

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.9	99
Rushing	120.1	96
Passing	213.3	72
Total	333.4	102
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.6	74
Rushing	149.9	58
Pass	255.2	96
Total	405.0	78
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	44

RANKING

66 TULSA | GOLDEN HURRICANE

C-USA rank: 4 Record: 8-5 C-USA record: 7-1 (2nd, West) Stadium: H.A. Chapman Stadium (30,000)

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Ja'Terian Douglas

"I think both of these guys can help us win a conference championship." — Coach Bill Blankenship, referring to QBs Kalen Henderson and Cody Green

GOLDEN HURRICANE at a GLANCE

COACH: Bill Blakenship — At Tulsa and overall: 8-5, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Peterson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Guy

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Ja'Terian Douglas, RB Trey Watts, HB Willie Carter, C Trent Dupy, LB Shawn Jackson, S Dexter McCoil

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Tulsa has to find a new quarterback, but it has plenty of depth at the skill positions. The team also has plenty of options in the defensive tackle position and playmakers in the secondary. If Tulsa gets a few breaks, it should be in contention for the league title.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Replacing a decorated quarterback such as G.J. Kinne is never easy. Dealing with the loss of most of the offensive line could compound potential scoring problems. Tulsa's defense hasn't proved its good enough to carry the team; untested special teams players could prove costly.

OFFENSE

Tulsa could advance to its third consecutive bowl game this season, but the Golden Hurricane has atypical uncertainty with its traditionally explosive offense.

Quarterback G.J. Kinne, who had started the past three years, is gone. The Golden Hurricane started spring practice with seven potential replacements. Only four were scholarship players, and, eventually, Nebraska transfer Cody Green emerged atop the depth chart.

Don't be surprised if sophomore Kalen Henderson contributes. He saw the most playing time in 2011 behind Kinne, and Green was slated for hip surgery late in the spring.

Finding and keeping a definitive starting quarterback is critical to the team's continuity. If the offensive line struggles to find familiarity and a groove, that would make it tough for Tulsa to keep pace in the almost-certain shootouts it will face this season.

Tulsa lost three starting linemen from last season. Reliable and sturdy center Trent Dupy is back, but the left side will be new.

There are plenty of skill players to provide assistance to the new signal caller. Tulsa's top two rushers from last year — Ja'Terian Douglas and Trey Watts — are back. Douglas earned second-team all-league honors, rushing for 883 yards and averaging 7.9 per carry. Watts went for 881 yards and caught 31 passes.

The top two pass-catchers — Willie Carter and Bryan Burnham — are also back after combining for 115 receptions and 16 touchdowns.

DEFENSE

The Golden Hurricane showed some modest improvement defensively last year, and the team has experienced playmakers returning in all the defensive position groups.

The secondary might be the strongest part of the defense.

Senior safety Dexter McCoil has 13 career interceptions, tying him for the most in school history. Fellow safety Marco Nelson's interception numbers dropped last year, but he has proven he is capable of making big plays in the passing game, which is critical for Tulsa's bend-but-don't-break defense in its pass-happy league.

Defensive end Cory Dorris and linebacker Shawn Jackson lead their respective position groups, and both were honorable mention All-Conference USA a year ago. It will be a challenge to replace middle linebacker Curnelius Arnick.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The kicker, long snapper and holder are all new. Projected kicker Daniel Schwarz, who was considered one of the nation's best kickers in his class, won't be on campus until the fall. Tulsa's 6-8 sophomore punter, Cole Way, is the most experienced player returning in the kicking game.

OVERVIEW

Tulsa has logged 44 wins in the past five years, putting the program 20th nationally for victories during that span. It would be difficult to imagine that the Golden Hurricane would struggle too much this year. A friendlier schedule — especially early — could get coach Bill Blankenship's second year rolling early. Tulsa needs to start fast because the last month of the season is particularly challenging, featuring road games at Arkansas, Houston and SMU.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Cody Green: He played 17 games at Nebraska and was the first freshman quarterback to start for the Huskers since Tommie Frazier in 1992. It will take that level of pedigree and potential to replace G.J. Kinne, one of the most accomplished quarterbacks in Tulsa history.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	7	Cody Green	6-4	247	Jr.
RB	**22**	**Trey Watts***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
HB	**34**	**Willie Carter***	**6-2**	**231**	**Sr.**
WR	**88**	**Bryan Burhnam***	**6-2**	**197**	**Sr.**
WR	1	Keyarris Garrett	6-4	207	So.
WR	**12**	**Jordan James***	**6-2**	**203**	**Jr.**
LT	72	Jared Grigg	6-4	280	Sr.
LG	77	Jake Alexander	6-2	294	So.
C	**53**	**Trent Dupy***	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
RG	65	Gabe Moyer	6-2	291	Jr.
RT	**73**	**Brian DeShane***	**6-3**	**305**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**50**	**Jared St. John***	**6-2**	**250**	**Sr.**
DT	**56**	**Daeshon Bufford***	**6-3**	**292**	**Sr.**
DT	92	Derrick Jackson	6-2	294	Sr.
DE	**93**	**Cory Dorris***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
LB	27	DeWitt Jennings	5-10	211	Jr.
LB	43	Donnell Hawkins	6-1	221	Jr.
LB	**55**	**Shawn Jackson***	**6-0**	**251**	**Jr.**
CB	**21**	**John Flanders***	**5-10**	**170**	**Sr.**
CB	7	Lowell Rose	6-1	192	Sr.
S	**26**	**Dexter McCoil***	**6-4**	**222**	**Sr.**
S	**20**	**Marco Nelson***	**6-0**	**192**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	N/A	Daniel Schwarz	6-3	189	Fr.
P	**28**	**Cole Way***	**6-8***	**205**	**So.**

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Iowa State
Sept. 8	TULANE
Sept. 15	NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 22	FRESNO STATE
Sept. 29	at UAB
Oct. 6	at Marshall
Oct. 13	UTEP
Oct. 20	RICE
Nov. 3	at Arkansas
Nov. 10	at Houston
Nov. 17	UCF
Nov. 24	at SMU

2011 RESULTS

L	at Oklahoma	14-47
W	at Tulane	31-3
L	OKLAHOMA STATE	33-59
L	at Boise State	21-41
W	NORTH TEXAS	41-24
W	UAB	37-20
W	at Rice	38-20
W	SMU	38-7
W	at UCF	24-17
W	MARSHALL	59-17
W	at UTEP	57-28
L	HOUSTON	16-48
	Armed Forces Bowl	
L	vs. BYU	21-24

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.1	29
Rushing	191.7	26
Passing	248.7	44
Total	440.4	27

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.3	64
Rushing	128.5	33
Pass	286.3	117
Total	414.8	87

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-6	-0.46	95

RANKING

67 HOUSTON | COUGARS

C-USA rank: 5 Record: 13-1 C-USA record: 8-0 (1st, West) Stadium: John O'Quinn Field at Robertson Stadium (32,000)

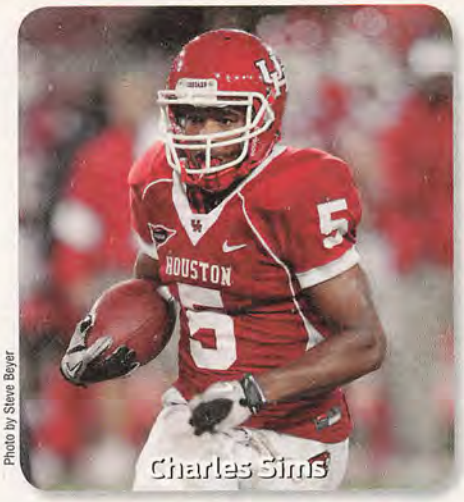


Photo by Steve Beyer

Charles Sims

"A year from now, I will be standing up here talking about how experienced we are going to be (on offense) heading into 2013." — Coach Tony Levine

COUGARS at a GLANCE

COACH: Tony Levine — At Houston, 1st year
OVERALL: 1-0 (coached 2011 bowl game)
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Nesbitt
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jamie Bryant

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB David Piland, RB Charles Sims, WR Daniel Spencer, LT Jacolby Ashworth, LB Derrick Mathews, CB D.J. Hayden, K Matt Hogan, P Richie Leone

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Houston has a quality kicking game and a potential all-conference runner in Sims. Piland proved capable in this pass-happy offense two years ago. The Cougars should still have no problem putting up points against most teams.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Last year's head coach, Kevin Sumlin, is now at Texas A&M. Record-setting QB Case Keenum and his record-setting wide receivers are gone. The defense still isn't scaring anyone. Bottom line: There is a lot of inexperience at key spots, and it's under new leadership.

OFFENSE

They will still air it out in Houston, even without NCAA career passing leader Case Keenum and record-setting wide receivers Patrick Edwards and Tyrone Carrier.

Luckily for first-year coach Tony Levine, new starting quarterback David Piland isn't your typical redshirt sophomore. He redshirted in 2011, but in 2010 he went from fourth-string true freshman to an eight-game starter after injuries above him on the depth chart.

In that trial-by-fire season, Piland led C-USA in passing yards per game (316.5).

No returning wide receiver had more than 16 receptions in 2011 on an offense that had 479 completions. They're raw. The best of the bunch might end up being freshman phenom Deontay Greenberry, who was a Signing Day steal from Notre Dame.

Junior running back Charles Sims is the team's best player and has first-team All-C-USA potential. He had 1,396 yards from scrimmage last year (821 rushing, 575 receiving) and scored 13 touchdowns.

The veteran line has four returning starters, led by left tackle Jacolby Ashworth and center/guard Kevin Forsch.

DEFENSE

A switch to a 4-3 defense and the return of seven starters has Houston hoping it can do better against the run than a year ago, when five opponents went off for more than 200 yards on the ground, including Rice with 359.

Sophomore linebacker Derrick Mathews leads the charge after a 106-tackle freshman season. He has help at linebacker with returning starter Phillip Steward and senior Everett Daniels, who had a monster spring.

Up front, returning starters Eric Braswell (end) and Dominic Miller (tackle) need help. Levine experimented with position changes, trying to find someone to play opposite Braswell. Before an injury, former linebacker Jon Witten looked the part. Former tight end/fullback Desmond Pulliam and former linebacker Ephrem Oliphant will both be in the mix at end.

Cornerback D.J. Hayden was the league's Defensive Newcomer of the Year in 2011. His counterpart, Zach McMillian, is also very good. Safeties Kent Brooks and Colton Valencia have starting experience and are physical players for their positions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Cougars have a good 1-2 punch in the kicking game, thanks to the return of kicker Matt Hogan and Ray Guy Award semifinalist punter Richie Leone. Hogan holds the NCAA record for consecutive PATs in a season (78) and Leone averaged 41.1 yards per punt last year.

The return game may suffer with Edwards and Carrier gone. Sophomore Damian Payne has a high ceiling as the possible replacement.

OVERVIEW

If Piland plays like a seasoned vet from his starting experience in 2010, the Cougars will continue to light up the scoreboard with plenty of passing and a heavy dose of running from Sims. But if Piland struggles, Houston's defense isn't good enough to bail out the Cougars. Fortunately for Houston, C-USA is pretty much in the same rebuilding boat, so this is a winnable conference for Houston in Levine's first season.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Deontay Greenberry: The "X" receiver position was unsettled after spring. That spot is tailor-made for Greenberry, a freshman who caught 109 passes for 2,165 yards and 33 TDs as a prep senior in Fresno, Calif. He was a Signing Day surprise after committing to Notre Dame.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	8	David Piland	6-3	200	So.
RB	**5**	**Charles Sims***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
WR	4	Ronnie Williams	5-11	188	Sr.
WR	9	Dewayne Peace	6-0	190	Jr.
WR	27	Daniel Spencer	6-0	193	So.
WR	N/A	Deontay Greenberry	6-3	187	Fr.
LT	**76**	**Jacolby Ashworth***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
LG	**64**	**Ty Cloud***	**6-4**	**315**	**Jr.**
C	**63**	**Kevin Forsch***	**6-5**	**301**	**Jr.**
RG	72	Emeka Okafor	6-5	315	So.
RT	**74**	**Rowdy Harper***	**6-6**	**290**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**97**	**Eric Braswell***	**6-4**	**250**	**So.**
DT	**99**	**Dominic Miller***	**6-3**	**301**	**Sr.**
DT	91	Radermon Scypion	6-4	275	Sr.
DE	51	Jon Witten	6-2	230	So.
LB	**49**	**Derrick Mathews***	**6-0**	**200**	**So.**
LB	**42**	**Phillip Steward***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	54	Everett Daniels	6-0	210	Sr.
CB	**10**	**Zach McMillian***	**5-10**	**175**	**Jr.**
CB	**2**	**D.J. Hayden***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
SS	**24**	**Kent Brooks***	**5-11**	**200**	**Jr.**
FS	20	Colton Valencia	5-10	190	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**46**	**Matt Hogan***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
P	**15**	**Richie Leone***	**6-3**	**200**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	TEXAS STATE
Sept. 8	LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 15	at UCLA
Sept. 29	vs. Rice (Houston, TX)
Oct. 6	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13	UAB
Oct. 20	at SMU
Oct. 27	UTEP
Nov. 3	at East Carolina
Nov. 10	TULSA
Nov. 17	at Marshall
Nov. 24	TULANE

2011 RESULTS

W	UCLA	38-34
W	at North Texas	48-23
W	at Louisiana Tech	35-34
W	GEORGIA STATE	56-0
W	at UTEP	49-42
W	EAST CAROLINA	56-3
W	MARSHALL	63-28
W	RICE	73-34
W	at UAB	56-13
W	at Tulane	73-17
W	SMU	37-7
W	at Tulsa	48-16
	C-USA Championship Game	
L	vs. Southern Miss	28-49
	Ticket City Bowl	
W	vs. Penn State	30-14

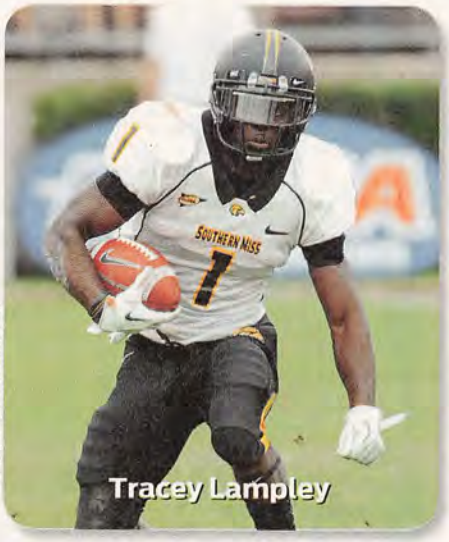
2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	49.3	1
Rushing	149.0	68
Passing	450.1	1
Total	599.1	1
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.4	35
Rushing	171.6	80
Pass	208.7	40
Total	380.3	62
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+16	+1.14	4

RANKING

70 SOUTHERN MISS | GOLDEN EAGLES

C-USA rank: 6 Record: 12-2 C-USA record: 6-2 (1st, East) Stadium: Carlisle-Faulkner Field at Roberts Stadium (36,000)



Tracey Lampley

Photo by Thomas B. Shea/Icon SMI

"One thing that is going to drive me as a head coach, I want to take the Golden Eagles to a BCS bowl game and win."

— Coach Ellis Johnson

GOLDEN EAGLES at a GLANCE

COACH: Ellis Johnson — At Southern Miss: 1st year
OVERALL: 17-28, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rickey Bustle
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tommy West

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 11, 6 offense, 4 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Kendrick Hardy, WR/KR Tracey Lampley, OL Joe Duhon, C Austin Quattrochi, LB/DE Jamie Collins, CB Deron Wilson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Golden Eagles return the interior of the offensive line, anchored by C Austin Quattrochi. It should give a new starting quarterback some peace of mind as he learns Johnson's spread attack. Wilson intercepted four passes last season, two of which he returned for scores.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: First-year defensive coordinator Tommy West, a former Clemson and Memphis coach, will have to work quickly to familiarize seven new starters with his 4-3 look. Veteran QB Austin Davis graduated and there's no quarterback with appreciable experience. Top RB Jamal Woodyard will miss the season with a knee injury.

OFFENSE

Southern Miss had the second-most productive offense in the conference a year ago, ranking behind the gaudy Case Keenum-driven numbers at Houston. But new coach Ellis Johnson must move on without veteran quarterback Austin Davis.

Chris Campbell, a redshirt junior, has yet to take a snap in his career. Next in line is redshirt freshman Ricky Lloyd. Campbell's development was delayed a year ago by a shoulder injury that kept him from getting his share of practice time as the backup.

At running back, Jamal Woodyard is expected to miss the season because of a knee injury. He rushed for 732 yards, averaging 6.7 yards per carry, last season. Southern Miss will look to senior Desmond Johnson, and juniors Jeremy Hester and Kendrick Hardy.

Hester (5-6, 180) had a solid spring practice. Hardy is a dependable veteran who has averaged 5.9 yards per carry.

Electrifying all-purpose performer Tracey Lampley should be a go-to player in coordinator Rickey Bustle's spread offense. Lampley was second on the team in rushing (463 yards, three touchdowns) and third in receiving (574 yards, four touchdowns) last fall. Converted tight end Markese Triplett could be a factor.

The Golden Eagles boast experience on the line, where center Austin Quattrochi and guards Joe Duhon and Darius Barnes return. Quattrochi is considered one of the top centers in C-USA.

DEFENSE

Tommy West, a coordinator in C-USA for the third time, takes over a defense that ranked third in the league last year.

Gone is most of the front seven and two defensive backs, but this program has consistently regrouped in short order.

End Jamie Collins, who possesses a freakish combination of power and speed, will be a candidate for league Defensive Player of the Year honors after amassing 19.5 tackles for loss and 6.5 sacks a year ago. He also returned an interception 97 yards for a score.

Junior cornerback Deron Wilson picked off four passes and returned two for touchdowns.

Up front, Rakeem Nunez-Roches provides the defense with a powerful and quick big man to complement nose tackle Khalid Wilson.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Lampley averaged a conference-best 11.5 yards on his 31 punt returns, one of which he returned for a score, last season. He likely will share kick return duties with Hester.

Gone is placekicker Danny Hrapmann, who led C-USA with 23 field goals, leaving the job to sophomore Corey Acosta, who converted both his field-goal attempts in relief of Hrapmann last year, including a 42-yarder.

Senior Peter Boehme will handle the punting duties. He ranked third in the conference with an average of 43 yards per punt.

OVERVIEW

Johnson will be trying to produce the Golden Eagles' 19th consecutive winning season. It will be challenging. Twelve position starters left after last season, along with coach Larry Fedora, who accepted the North Carolina job after winning a C-USA title. Expect a rare down year for Southern Miss, which means a middle-of-the-road finish in the league.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Anthony Alford: The incoming freshman is a dual threat who was rated a four-star recruit by Rivals.com. With nothing certain at quarterback, the two-time Mississippi Gatorade Player of the Year will try to make a case for playing time in fall camp.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	13	Chris Campbell	6-4	208	Jr.
RB	7	Desmond Johnson	5-11	200	Sr.
WR	**18**	**Dominique Sullivan***	**6-4**	**208**	**Jr.**
WR	**1**	**Tracey Lampley***	**5-9**	**168**	**Sr.**
WR	85	Quentin Pierce	5-11	193	Sr.
TE	**81**	**Ryan Hanks***	**6-5**	**246**	**Sr.**
LT	52	Jason Weaver	6-5	302	Sr.
LG	**68**	**Joe Duhon***	**6-2**	**292**	**Sr.**
C	**62**	**Austin Quattrochi***	**6-3**	**292**	**Sr.**
RG	**51**	**Darius Barnes***	**6-4**	**329**	**Sr.**
RT	70	Vincent Brown	6-6	314	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	45	Dasman McCullum	6-3	238	So.
DT	98	Khyri Thornton	6-3	299	Jr.
NT	97	Rakeem Nunez-Roches	6-3	312	So.
DE	**8**	**Jamie Collins***	**6-4**	**239**	**Sr.**
LB	21	Dylan Reda	6-3	235	Jr.
LB	37	Alan Howze	6-2	219	Jr.
LB	**5**	**Jerrion Johnson***	**6-1**	**195**	**Jr.**
CB	31	Alexander Walters	5-10	166	Jr.
CB	**22**	**Deron Wilson***	**5-10**	**175**	**Jr.**
SS	**28**	**Jacorius Cotton***	**5-9**	**190**	**Jr.**
FS	16	Alex Smith	5-11	193	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	25	Corey Acosta	5-10	186	So.
P	**39**	**Peter Boehme***	**5-11**	**216**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Nebraska
Sept. 15	EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 22	at Western Kentucky
Sept. 29	LOUISVILLE
Oct. 6	BOISE STATE
Oct. 13	at UCF
Oct. 20	MARSHALL
Oct. 27	at Rice
Nov. 3	UAB
Nov. 10	at SMU
Nov. 17	UTEP
Nov. 24	at Memphis

2011 RESULTS

W	LOUISIANA TECH	19-17
L	at Marshall	20-26
W	SE LOUISIANA	52-6
W	at Virginia	30-24
W	RICE	48-24
W	at Navy	63-35
W	SMU	27-3
W	at UTEP	31-13
W	at East Carolina	48-28
W	UCF	30-29
L	at UAB	31-34
W	MEMPHIS	44-7
	C-USA Championship Game	
W	vs. Houston	49-28
	Hawaii Bowl	
W	vs. Nevada	24-17

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.9	14
Rushing	205.1	20
Passing	256.2	34
Total	461.4	17
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.8	26
Rushing	118.6	24
Pass	224.4	62
Total	343.0	29
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 2	- 0.14	73

RANKING

107 TULANE | GREEN WAVE

C-USA rank: 7 Record: 2-11 C-USA record: 1-7 (6th, West) Stadium: Superdome (69,703)

Orleans Darkwa

Photo by Michael Wade

"I think if Griffin does a good job, we should improve. And he's really improved."

— Coach Curtis Johnson, on QB Ryan Griffin

GREEN WAVE at a GLANCE

COACH: Curtis Johnson — At Tulane and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Price
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Jon Sumrall/Lionel Washington

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST BOWL: 2002, Hawaii
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Orleans Darkwa, TE Matt Marfisi, DE Austen Jacks, LB Trent Mackey, CB Ryan Travis

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Green Wave's deepest and most talented position is running back. Linebacker is another strength, led by Mackey, who finished second in the league in tackles in 2011 with 145. The excitement of a new coach could count for something.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Tulane has depth issues on both lines, but the primary concern is the wide receiver group. The Green Wave had trouble running routes and gaining separation to feed the passing game last season; without that threat, defenses loaded the box to contain Tulane's run.

OFFENSE

New head coach Curtis Johnson moved Tulane from the West Coast offense it used under Bob Toledo for four-and-a-half seasons and implemented a more pro-style multiple scheme that is heavy on screen passes and personnel packages for running backs.

Johnson inherits a deep and talented group of backs, led by Orleans Darkwa, who is healthy after playing banged up through the 2011 season.

Darkwa rushed for 924 yards and 13 touchdowns in 2011 after partially tearing a ligament in his toe. He said he wasn't able to pivot and gain the same explosiveness he did during this freshman campaign in 2010, when he ran for 925 yards. Darkwa has healed and could lead C-USA in rushing in 2012.

A youthful offensive line is particularly untested on the left side, but the biggest questions with the offense reside in the passing game.

The receiving unit is a concern, Johnson said, and he hopes to see quarterback Ryan Griffin put all the pieces together. Griffin passed for 2,502 yards, completing 227 of 408 throws, but he threw 10 interceptions compared to 13 touchdowns.

The tight ends dropped a lot of passes in the spring game — another point of concern considering how much Johnson wants to use tight ends.

DEFENSE

Lionel Washington, a longtime NFL secondary coach, will be calling the defensive plays, but he co-coordinates with Jon Sumrall, Tulane's new line coach.

In addition to a base 4-3, the duo has a nifty 3-4 scheme that will utilize the Green Wave's versatile edge players.

There are huge depth issues on the line, where Tulane lost three starting seniors, including defensive end Dezman Moses, an NFL free-agent signee. Austen Jacks is left as the most experienced lineman at right end.

Linebacker is the biggest strength on Tulane's defense, and the centerpiece of that group is senior middle linebacker Trent Mackey. Mackey led the team with 145 tackles in 2011.

The secondary is still unsettled despite having cornerback Ryan Travis, who picked off four passes in 2011. Among the issues: Cornerback Jordan Sullen, a rising senior, left school this winter after committing a breach of university policy.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kickoff return is a strength. Robert Kelley and Dante' Butler averaged 20.4 and 20.6 yards a return last season, respectively, with Kelley doing much of the work (64 returns for 1,305 yards).

The squad also returns seasoned placekicker Cairo Santos. But kickoff and punt coverage continued to plague the Green Wave in 2011. That will be a huge focus for new special teams coordinator Barry Lamb.

OVERVIEW

Johnson will be trying to do what no coach has done since 2002 — guide Tulane to a bowl game. A talented crop of freshmen, including cornerback Darion Monroe, arrive this fall to bolster the team, but this isn't a one-year fix and the Green Wave will have to be content to take small steps toward the postseason this year.

TOP NEWCOMER

CB Darion Monroe: The incoming freshman from LaPlace, La., was rated a four-star recruit and the 11th-best prospect in the state by Rivals.com. He used his athleticism to star on both sides of the ball in high school, recording eight interceptions as a senior.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	11	Ryan Griffin*	6-5	218	Sr.
TB	26	Orleans Darkwa*	6-0	214	Jr.
FB	24	Stephen Barnett	6-0	209	Sr.
WR	3	Ryan Grant	6-1	194	Jr.
WR	9	Wilson Van Hooser*	6-0	194	Jr.
TE	88	Matt Marfisi*	6-6	250	So.
LT	76	Nate Skold	6-6	298	Fr.
LG	74	Adam Skidmore	6-6	300	So.
C	65	Zach Morgan*	6-3	305	Sr.
RG	72	Rio Mares	6-5	305	Jr.
RT	79	Eric Jones*	6-6	308	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	51	Michael Pierce Jr.	6-1	282	So.
DT	92	Julius Warmsley	6-2	281	Jr.
NT	93	Kenny Welcome	6-2	295	So.
DE	50	Austen Jacks*	6-3	247	Sr.
LB	34	Darryl Farley*	6-0	235	Sr.
LB	20	Trent Mackey*	5-11	227	Sr.
LB	45	Matthew Bailey	5-11	204	So.
CB	7	Jordan Batiste	5-9	170	Fr.
CB	10	Ryan Travis*	6-0	172	Sr.
SS	4	Shakiel Smith*	6-0	207	Sr.
FS	21	Kyle Davis	5-11	210	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	19	Cairo Santos*	5-9	160	Jr.
P	16	Jonathan Ginsburgh*	5-11	201	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	RUTGERS
Sept. 8	at Tulsa
Sept. 22	OLE MISS
Sept. 29	ULM
Oct. 6	at Louisiana
Oct. 13	SMU
Oct. 20	at UTEP
Oct. 27	UAB
Nov. 3	RICE
Nov. 10	at Memphis
Nov. 17	EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 24	at Houston

2011 RESULTS

W	SE Louisiana	47-33
L	TULSA	3-31
W	at UAB	49-10
L	at Duke	27-48
L	at Army	6-45
L	SYRACUSE	34-37
L	UTEP	7-44
L	MEMPHIS	17-33
L	at East Carolina	13-34
L	at SMU	24-45
L	HOUSTON	17-73
L	at Rice	7-19
L	at Hawaii	23-35

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.1	105
Rushing	126.3	86
Passing	214.0	71
Total	340.3	97
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	37.5	115
Rushing	164.9	71
Pass	245.4	87
Total	410.3	83
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-7	-0.54	97

RANKING

108 EAST CAROLINA | PIRATES

C-USA rank: 8 Record: 5-7 C-USA record: 4-4 (3rd, East) Stadium: Dowdy-Ficklen (50,000)

Photo by Jeff Siner/Charlotte Observer/MCT

"We'll add some guys, but I really like this football team."
— Coach Ruffin McNeill

PIRATES at a GLANCE

COACH: Ruffin McNeill — At ECU and overall: 12-14, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lincoln Riley
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Mitchell

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2009
LAST BOWL: 2010, Military
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 7 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Rio Johnson, RB Reggie Bullock, WR Justin Hardy, WR Andrew Bodenheimer, LB Jeremy Grove, LB Daniel Drake, FS Damon Magazu

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Speed and depth at wide receiver will be a major commodity on offense. The key is getting the ball into the right hands on a consistent basis with a new quarterback. With even more improvement on defense, this could be one of the better units in C-USA as it returns nearly 70 percent of its tackles.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Retooling an offense that loses the prowess of Dominique Davis isn't the easiest thing. The Pirates are always challenged at running back; a steady performer would be welcomed. Bullock and Michael Dobson will be counted on heavily unless someone else emerges.

OFFENSE

Rio Johnson steps in for school-record-setting quarterback Dominique Davis after serving as a backup a year ago. He played in four games, with the most action coming in a 13-for-21 effort in a one-sided loss to Houston.

East Carolina does have a Plan B in sophomore Shane Carden, inexperienced but capable, just in case Johnson struggles.

The receiving corps is again in excellent shape despite losing playmaker Lance Lewis. Justin Hardy was the leading receiver last season as a freshman, when he had team-highs in receptions (64) and yards (658).

Andrew Bodenheimer will serve as a possession receiver to complement ECU's excessive speed at the position. Reese Wiggins is expected to replace Lewis on the outside after leading the Pirates with 14.9 yards per catch. Dayon Arrington and Danny Webster will also be key cogs.

It seems as if East Carolina is always looking for a featured back, and this season is no exception. Reggie Bullock and Michael Dobson look like the leaders for a team that finished 105th nationally last season at 109.1 yards rushing per game.

The Pirates return four starters to a line that allowed 30 sacks last season, and Johnson will operate out of the pocket in the same style Davis did for two seasons.

DEFENSE

The Pirates' move to a 3-4 scheme last season paid dividends, as the team improved markedly on its numbers from 2010, when ECU was last nationally, allowing 478.8 yards per game. In 2011, that number fell to 376.3, 56th in the NCAA.

Linebacker Jeremy Grove was a partial catalyst behind that improvement. Grove orchestrated one of the best campaigns of any defensive player in the team's history, as he recorded 122 tackles. A left shoulder injury kept him out of spring drills, but he is expected back on the field when the season starts.

Maurice Falls and Derrell Johnson look like solid starters at linebacker. Kyle Tudor and Daniel Drake will challenge each other for the inside position opposite Grove.

Free safety Damon Magazu is a prime-time playmaker. The junior led ECU with four interceptions and was second in tackles with 80.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kirk Doll is the new special teams coordinator, arriving from San Jose State. He will oversee an overhaul of a unit that netted 29.6 yards per punt, last in the NCAA, and a kickoff return unit that tallied only 19.2 yards per effort, 108th in the land.

Trent Tignor, who is penciled in as the team's punter, was the holder for the past two years. The new placekicker will be sophomore Warren Harvey or freshman Connor Torruella.

The return positions are up for grabs as ECU looks for improvement to both units.

OVERVIEW

If the defense continues its ascension, then the Pirates can compete for a bowl. With a high-powered offense orchestrated by talented coordinator Lincoln Riley, the Pirates can be effective and put points on the board, even without Davis at quarterback.

TOP NEWCOMER

S Lucas Thompson: The freshman was a big get for the Pirates on Signing Day as Thompson held offers from schools in each of the BCS automatic qualifying conferences. Thompson was rated the nation's 17th-best safety by Rivals.com, and he seems like a good bet for early playing time.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	7	Rio Johnson	6-2	188	Jr.
RB	28	Reggie Bullock	5-9	178	Sr.
WR	**19**	**Andrew Bodenheimer***	**6-3**	**202**	**Sr.**
WR	**2**	**Justin Hardy***	**6-0**	**185**	**So.**
WR	15	Reese Wiggins	5-11	188	So.
WR	33	Danny Webster	5-10	175	So.
LT	**57**	**Adhem Elsawi***	**6-5**	**318**	**Jr.**
LG	**78**	**Jordan Davis Jr.***	**6-3**	**290**	**Jr.**
C	74	Taylor Hudson	6-5	294	So.
RG	**70**	**Will Simmons***	**6-5**	**336**	**Jr.**
RT	**67**	**Grant Harner***	**6-6**	**308**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	58	Lee Pegues	6-2	290	Jr.
NT	**92**	**Michael Brooks***	**6-3**	**313**	**Sr.**
DE	**98**	**Matt Milner***	**6-4**	**259**	**Jr.**
LB	**56**	**Derrell Johnson***	**6-2**	**264**	**Jr.**
LB	20	Kyle Tudor	6-3	241	Jr.
LB	**53**	**Jeremy Grove***	**6-1**	**233**	**So.**
LB	48	Maurice Falls	6-2	251	So.
CB	8	Jacobi Jenkins	6-0	185	Sr.
CB	25	Leonard Paulk	5-11	197	Sr.
SS	7	Lamar Ivey	6-1	187	So.
FS	**11**	**Damon Magazu***	**5-11**	**203**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	20	Warren Harvey	5-11	205	So.
P	38	Trent Tignor	6-5	213	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 8	at South Carolina
Sept. 15	at Southern Miss
Sept. 22	at North Carolina
Sept. 29	UTEP
Oct. 6	at UCF
Oct. 13	MEMPHIS
Oct. 20	at UAB
Oct. 27	NAVY
Nov. 3	HOUSTON
Nov. 17	at Tulane
Nov. 24	MARSHALL

2011 RESULTS

L	at South Carolina	37-56
L	VIRGINIA TECH	10-17
W	UAB	28-23
L	NORTH CAROLINA	20-35
L	at Houston	3-56
W	at Memphis	35-17
W	at Navy	38-35
W	TULANE	34-13
L	SOUTHERN MISS	28-48
L	at UTEP	17-22
W	UCF	38-31
L	at Marshall (OT)	27-34

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.3	66
Rushing	109.1	105
Passing	286.1	20
Total	395.2	50
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	32.3	97
Rushing	174.2	81
Pass	202.2	33
Total	376.3	56
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-14	-1.17	119

RANKING

110 RICE | OWLS

C-USA rank: 9 Record: 4-8 C-USA record: 3-5 (4th, West) Stadium: Rice Stadium (47,000)

Photo by Doug Holleman

"Taylor's got a lead on Driphus ... but I think we'll have great competition there."

— Coach David Bailiff, on Rice's quarterback battle

OWLS at a GLANCE

COACH: David Bailiff — At Rice: 23-38, 5 years
OVERALL: 44-53, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Reagan
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Thurmond

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Southwest Conference co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2008, Texas Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 5 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Sam McGuffie, QB Taylor McHargue, WR Vance McDonald, LB Cameron Nwosu, CB Bryce Callahan

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: On paper, Rice has plenty of talented weapons. In a league like Conference USA, that type of ability should keep the Owls competitive. Two of the top offensive players — McHargue and McGuffie — are versatile.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Owls appear to be a bit faster on defense, but that might not be enough to alleviate what ails the team on that side of the ball. Few teams are worse against the pass, and Rice is going to have to prove that's different this season.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Taylor McHargue appears to be the starter for the third consecutive year, although in his previous two seasons at the helm, injuries and bouts of poor decision-making brought him to the bench.

If he doesn't show improvement, or at least consistency, freshman Driphus Jackson should get a chance.

Former Michigan Wolverine Sam McGuffie led the Owls in rushing and receiving in 2010 before an injury-marred 2011 campaign. Now, he has made the move to slot receiver and his speed will be an X-factor in various roles all over the offense.

Rice's leading receiver in 2011, Vance McDonald, is also back. He had 43 catches for 532 yards last season.

Right guard Drew Carroll is the only returning starter on the offensive line. The unit has to find chemistry quickly or the offense almost certainly will struggle. Rice was strong in the red zone last year, and could build upon that.

DEFENSE

Head coach David Bailiff overhauled his defensive staff, including promoting cornerbacks coach Chris Thurmond to coordinator. He should have a faster unit to work with this year, and, just maybe, Rice won't be as vulnerable to the pass.

Rice allowed 278.7 passing yards per game in a pass-happy league. If that number doesn't change for the better, then more Rice players must find ways to get turnovers, as cornerback Bryce Callahan did last year as a freshman with a team-high six interceptions. No freshman in the nation had more.

Thurmond has five returning starters. Three likely starters not included in that number are previous starters — linebacker Trey Briggs, defensive end Corey Bauer and cornerback Phillip Gaines, who each missed most, if not all, of 2011 with injuries.

If they return to form, they could give Rice a strong boost. Last year's leading tackler, linebacker Cameron Nwosu, is also back.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punting was a strength last year, something that helped an often feeble defense. But Kyle Martens is gone and Rice might turn to a freshman to replace him. Junior kicker Chris Boswell is on pace to set several of the school's field-goal records; he was 17 of 21 last season, with two of the misses coming from 54-plus yards.

The kick return game was weak last year, which wasn't surprising considering Rice hasn't returned a kickoff for a touchdown since 1984.

OVERVIEW

In the past three seasons, Bailiff has managed only 10 wins, as many victories as he had in the 2008 season alone. After back-to-back 4-8 seasons, the Owls need to take a significant positive step, or they may be looking at a program overhaul, from the head coach down.

A kinder schedule could allow Rice to gain some needed confidence. If that happens, and the offense hums, Rice could sniff bowl eligibility. But if the defense remains shaky and the offense inconsistent, it will be another losing season — perhaps Bailiff's last at the school.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Alex Lyons: Widely considered the best prospect of Rice's 2012 class, Lyons is a speedy linebacker who excels sideline to sideline. He's quick but tough, and he had offers from SEC, Big Ten, Big 12 and Pac-12 schools. Lyons is known as a hard hitter and sure tackler.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**16**	**Taylor McHargue***	**6-1**	**215**	**Jr.**
RB	28	Charles Ross	6-1	230	Sr.
WR	**81**	**Donte Moore***	**6-0**	**180**	**Jr.**
WR	2	Sam McGuffie	5-10	200	Sr.
WR	**88**	**Vance McDonald***	**6-5**	**260**	**Sr.**
TE	**82**	**Luke Willson***	**6-5**	**250**	**Sr.**
LT	75	Justin Warren	6-3	295	So.
LG	72	Ian Gray	6-8	320	So.
C	53	Nate Richards	6-4	305	Jr.
RG	**76**	**Drew Carroll***	**6-4**	**280**	**So.**
RT	79	Jon Hodde	6-7	300	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	90	Cody Bauer	6-4	255	Jr.
DT	93	Hosam Shahin	6-3	275	Jr.
DT	98	Jamael Thomas	6-0	270	Sr.
DE	**97**	**Jared Williams***	**6-2**	**250**	**Sr.**
LB	49	Trey Briggs	6-1	235	Jr.
LB	**34**	**Cameron Nwosu***	**5-10**	**235**	**Jr.**
CB	**29**	**Bryce Callahan***	**5-10**	**180**	**So.**
CB	15	Phillip Gaines	6-1	185	Sr.
S	**20**	**Corey Frazier***	**6-1**	**210**	**Jr.**
S	**24**	**Paul Porras***	**6-1**	**190**	**Jr.**
S	13	Tanner Leland	6-2	220	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**9**	**Chris Boswell***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**
P	32	James Farrimond	6-0	205	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	UCLA
Sept. 8	at Kansas
Sept. 15	at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 22	MARSHALL
Sept. 29	vs. Houston (Reliant Stadium)
Oct. 6	at Memphis
Oct. 13	UTSA
Oct. 20	at Tulsa
Oct. 27	SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 3	at Tulane
Nov. 17	SMU
Nov. 24	at UTEP

2011 RESULTS

L	at Texas	9-34
W	PURDUE	24-22
L	at Baylor	31-56
L	at Southern Miss	24-48
W	MEMPHIS	28-6
L	at Marshall	20-24
L	TULSA	20-38
L	at Houston	34-73
W	UTEP	41-37
L	at Northwestern	6-28
W	TULANE	19-7
L	at SMU	24-27

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.3	85
Rushing	150.9	67
Passing	196.8	82
Total	347.7	91
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.3	99
Rushing	183.4	88
Pass	278.7	112
Total	462.1	111
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.67	20

RANKING

111 UTEP | MINERS

C-USA rank: 10 | Record: 5-7 | C-USA record: 2-6 (5th, West) | Stadium: Sun Bowl (51,500)

Photo by Troy Taormina-US PRESSWIRE

"It's the most competitive schedule we've had since I've been here. It's where we want to be."
— Coach Mike Price

MINERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mike Price — At UTEP: 45-52, 8 years
OVERALL: 174-174, 30 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Aaron Price
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andre Patterson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000, WAC
LAST BOWL: 2005, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 7 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Nick Lamaison, RB Nathan Jeffery, WR Mike Edwards, C Eloy Atkinson, DT Germard Reed, S DeShawn Grayson, P Ian Campbell

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Lamaison showed he could be a productive quarterback in this system. He has four returning linemen in front of him and plenty of weapons to throw to, namely Edwards. LB Jamie Irving's return from a shoulder injury gives the defense its best player; Campbell is a Ray Guy Award candidate.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: UTEP doesn't have depth, a proven running back or a schedule that is conducive to shaking off six consecutive losing seasons. The Miners may have four returning starters on the offensive line, but four of the five projected starters up front sat out of spring drills after injuries ruined the unit in 2011.

OFFENSE

Offense, and passing in particular, used to be Mike Price's calling card. But one of college football's current winningest coaches proved last year a lack of talent makes the best of playbooks look mediocre.

The Miners were a run-first team in 2011, but gone are Joe Banyard, Vernon Frazier and Leilyon Myers, who accounted for 1,634 of the team's 1,859 rushing yards and 21 of 24 touchdowns on the ground.

Sophomore running back Nathan Jeffery possesses home run speed, but he carried just 26 times last year and has little, if any, quality depth backing him up.

Senior quarterback Nick Lamaison, meanwhile, is steady when healthy. He has two legitimate targets in senior Mike Edwards and sophomore Jordan Leslie (combined 80 receptions, 1,087 receiving yards), as well as three start-worthy tight ends.

None of that matters if the line, beset by injuries the last two years, can't protect. Four starters sat out of spring drills with injuries, but center Eloy Atkinson can push for all-league honors if healthy.

DEFENSE

Only four starters return on defense — five if you count 2010 starting linebacker Jamie Irving, who sat out 2011 with a shoulder injury.

Maybe that isn't bad news, considering the Miners couldn't seem to stop any team with a winning record. The four teams UTEP held to 17 or fewer points last year had a combined record of 14-36.

Irving, assuming he's healthy, should be the anchor at middle linebacker. The senior could be one of C-USA's top tacklers, especially if teams rush between the tackles with ease as they did in 2011 when the Miners allowed 189.8 rushing yards per game and had seven teams run for at least 200 yards in a game.

UTEP's rush defense could improve if returning starters Germard Reed, an all-league capable defensive tackle, and Horace Miller, a solid defensive end, get any help up front.

The secondary returns free safety DeShawn Grayson (67 tackles, two interceptions) and cornerback Drew Thomas (six pass breakups), but it lost two great ones in strong safety Travaun Nixon (four interceptions in seven games) and cornerback Antwon Blake (seven pass breakups).

SPECIAL TEAMS

The team's best player might be senior punter Ian Campbell, a Ray Guy Award candidate who led C-USA in 2011 with a 46.1-yard average. Senior Dakota Warren is still the best option at kicker, but the coaching staff seemed thrilled with the spring work of sophomore Steven Valadez, who will at the very least man kickoff duties.

With Jeffery poised to be the starting running back, the Miners' best return man may be limited on special teams.

OVERVIEW

Price enters his fourth decade of coaching and is a fan favorite, but his coaching seat couldn't be warmer after six consecutive losing seasons. It's unlikely the Miners field a top-half offense or defense in C-USA. If UTEP can't beat fellow bottom-feeding rival NMSU on Sept. 15, starting 0-7 is possible.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB LaQuintus Dowell: The redshirt freshman will contend for the No. 2 running back position. He has great versatility and — despite being benched in the spring due to grades — can help with kick returns.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**7**	**Nick Lamaison***	**6-1**	**215**	**Sr.**
RB	25	Nathan Jeffery	5-11	195	So.
WR	11	Malcolm Trail	6-1	185	So.
WR	9	Jordan Leslie	6-2	210	So.
WR	**6**	**Michael Edwards***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
TE	82	Kevin Perry	6-5	255	Jr.
LT	**58**	**Brander Craighead***	**6-6**	**280**	**Jr.**
LG	**69**	**Jerel Watkins***	**6-3**	**285**	**So.**
C	**63**	**Eloy Atkinson***	**6-3**	**305**	**Sr.**
RG	62	Kyle Brown	6-2	280	So.
RT	**68**	**James Nelson***	**6-7**	**350**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**33**	**Horace Miller***	**6-1**	**240**	**Jr.**
NT	99	Marcus Bagley	6-1	320	Jr.
DT	**61**	**Germard Reed***	**6-1**	**285**	**Jr.**
DE	44	Greg Watkins	6-5	220	Sr.
LB	48	Aubrey Alexius	5-11	225	Sr.
LB	4	Jamie Irving	6-0	235	Sr.
LB	56	Josh Fely	5-11	225	Sr.
CB	5	Darren Woodard	5-11	170	Sr.
CB	**10**	**Drew Thomas***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
S	**2**	**DeShawn Grayson***	**6-0**	**205**	**Sr.**
S	24	Richard Spencer	6-2	210	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**8**	**Dakota Warren***	**5-10**	**195**	**Sr.**
P	**7**	**Ian Campbell***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	OKLAHOMA
Sept. 8	at Ole Miss
Sept. 15	NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 22	at Wisconsin
Sept. 29	at East Carolina
Oct. 6	SMU
Oct. 13	at Tulsa
Oct. 20	TULANE
Oct. 27	at Houston
Nov. 10	UCF
Nov. 17	at Southern Miss
Nov. 24	RICE

2011 RESULTS

W	STONY BROOK (OT)	31-24
L	at SMU	17-28
W	at New Mexico State	16-10
L	at South Florida	24-52
L	HOUSTON	42-49
W	at Tulane	44-7
W	COLORADO STATE	31-17
L	SOUTHERN MISS	13-31
L	at Rice	37-41
W	EAST CAROLINA	22-17
L	TULSA	28-57
L	at UCF	14-31

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.6	62
Rushing	154.9	61
Passing	225.6	67
Total	380.5	64
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.3	86
Rushing	189.8	95
Pass	251.7	92
Total	441.5	104
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-8	-0.67	100

RANKING

114 UAB | BLAZERS

C-USA rank: 11 | Record: 3-9 | C-USA record: 3-5 (T-4th, East) | Stadium: Legion Field (72,000)

Photo by Michael Wade

Marvin Burdette

"Once we got going (in spring practice), I saw a lot of really good players on this team."
— Coach Garrick McGee

BLAZERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Garrick McGee — At UAB and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Brohm
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Reggie Johnson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: 2004, Hawaii Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 4 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jonathan Perry, RB Greg Franklin, WR Jackie Williams, OT Chris Hubbard, DE Diaheem Watkins, DT Connor Boyett, LB Marvin Burdette, CB Cornelius Richards

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Blazers are blessed with four solid running backs and a deep group of playmaking receivers. On defense, Burdette leads a deep group of linebackers.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Hubbard is the lone experienced offensive lineman; the line blocked well in the running game during spring practice, but work is still needed to protect the passer. The Blazers don't have a proven backup at quarterback. The situation at secondary is scary with few proven players.

OFFENSE

New coach Garrick McGee made his name in the college coaching world because of his work on offense. His specialty is coaching quarterbacks, and he spent the past four seasons under Bobby Petrino at Arkansas, including the last two as offensive coordinator.

McGee inherits an experienced quarterback, a large group of talented receivers and a stable of quality running backs.

All of that might not matter, though, if the offensive line doesn't jell quickly.

Quick tackle Chris Hubbard has all-conference ability, but no one else is proven up front. UAB has some quality linemen but, for the most part, they are young.

Quarterback Jonathan Perry is more of a passer than a runner, but he can make plays with his feet when necessary. He started eight games last season, throwing for 2,042 yards with 10 touchdowns and eight interceptions. UAB doesn't have any experience backing him up.

The Blazers have plenty of options at receiver. Junior Jackie Williams has 88 catches in his first two seasons. Seniors Nick Adams and Patrick Hearn, and sophomores D.J. Vinson and Jay Davis, are dependable targets. No one on the team is faster than sophomore Jamarcus Nelson.

Junior Greg Franklin was the team's leading rusher last season (84 carries, 430 yards), with sophomore Darrin Reaves next in line. Senior Dontavius Jackson is an excellent short-yardage option.

DEFENSE

The defense is built around middle linebacker Marvin Burdette's ability to make the crucial hits. The 5-11, 230-pound Burdette has 249 career tackles, which is 123 short of tying Zac Woodfin's school record. He should be better after shedding more than 20 pounds since last season.

Senior linebacker Greg Irvin had 66 tackles in his first year as a starter last season and also chipped in with five fumble recoveries. Junior Patrick Bastien had a strong spring practice, and no linebacker is more capable of making big plays than senior D.A. Autry.

The defensive front took a huge step forward in the spring with defensive end Diaheem Watkins earning the spotlight with three sacks in the spring game. His ability to shed blockers caught the eye of the coaching staff, that's for sure.

It also helps that Connor Boyett, a two-year starter at defensive end, slid over to tackle, giving UAB speed and quickness inside.

Cornelius Richards is the only experienced cornerback, and Calvin Jones is the lone safety with significant playing time on his resume.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ty Long made 16 of 19 field-goal attempts as a true freshman, including the game-winner against C-USA champion Southern Miss. Hunter Mullins steps in for dependable punter Trey Ragland. Mullins has a stronger leg but needs to be more consistent.

OVERVIEW

It will take a couple of recruiting classes to plug all the holes, but McGee already has created an unprecedented amount of enthusiasm to a program that has been spinning its wheels since playing in the 2004 Hawaii Bowl. Six wins and bowl eligibility would be a huge leap for the program.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Bashr Coles: The redshirt freshman seems to have the best combination of size and speed among UAB's running backs. He had seven carries for 63 yards in the spring game and also played well in other scrimmages.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**14**	**Jonathan Perry***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**
RB	**24**	**Greg Franklin***	**5-11**	**197**	**Jr.**
WR	**15**	**Jackie Williams***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
WR	1	Jamarcus Nelson	5-11	160	So.
WR	**12**	**Nick Adams***	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
TE	**86**	**Kennard Backman***	**6-3**	**258**	**So.**
OT	**74**	**Chris Hubbard***	**6-4**	**285**	**Sr.**
OG	79	Cody Payne	6-6	275	Sr.
C	57	John Hix	6-2	270	So.
SG	76	Brian O'Leary	6-2	290	So.
ST	60	Kaycee Ike	6-5	293	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**91**	**Diaheem Watkins***	**6-4**	**258**	**So.**
DT	**48**	**Connor Boyett***	**6-5**	**267**	**Jr.**
NT	95	Deric Scott	6-3	285	Jr.
DE	90	Chris Walton	6-3	260	So.
LB	47	Patrick Bastien	6-3	227	Jr.
LB	**43**	**Marvin Burdette***	**5-11**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**46**	**Greg Irvin***	**5-11**	**218**	**Sr.**
CB	28	Cornelius Richards	6-1	179	Sr.
CB	23	Caleb Lester	5-10	190	Jr.
SS	6	Lamar Johnson	6-2	205	Sr.
FS	11	Calvin Jones	5-10	187	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**94**	**Ty Long***	**6-2**	**188**	**So.**
P	65	Hunter Mullins	6-3	195	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	TROY
Sept. 15	at South Carolina
Sept. 22	at Ohio State
Sept. 29	TULSA
Oct. 6	S.E. LOUISIANA
Oct. 13	at Houston
Oct. 20	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 27	at Tulane
Nov. 3	at Southern Miss
Nov. 10	MARSHALL
Nov. 17	MEMPHIS
Nov. 24	at UCF

2011 RESULTS

L	at Florida	0-39
L	TULANE	10-49
L	at East Carolina	23-28
L	at Troy	23-24
L	MISSISSIPPI STATE	3-21
L	at Tulsa	20-37
W	UCF	26-24
L	at Marshall	14-59
L	HOUSTON	13-56
W	at Memphis	41-35
W	SOUTHERN MISS	34-31
L	at FAU	35-38

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.2	108
Rushing	129.4	84
Passing	234.6	60
Total	364.0	81
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	36.8	110
Rushing	203.3	103
Pass	282.3	114
Total	485.6	114
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-5	-0.42	91

RANKING

119 MEMPHIS | TIGERS

C-USA rank: 12 Record: 2-10 C-USA record: 1-7 (6th, East) Stadium: Liberty Bowl Memorial (61,000)

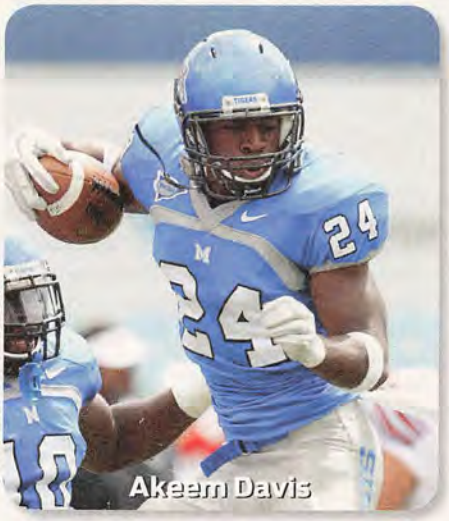


Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

"We had a lot to teach from a work ethic standpoint and from an accountability and discipline standpoint." — Coach Justin Fuente

TIGERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Justin Fuente — At Memphis and overall, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Darrell Dickey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Barry Odom

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1971, Missouri Valley
LAST BOWL: 2008, St. Petersburg Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 4 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Jerrell Rhodes, WR Marcus Rucker, WR Kevin Wright, LT Jordan Devey, DT Terry Redden, CB Bobby McCain

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: It's hard to imagine that such a poor defense in recent seasons might become a team strength. But the defense appeared to be much improved in the spring, especially up front. Newcomers to the starting lineup — LB Charles Harris and DT Terry Redden — were teammates in high school in Memphis and are poised for breakout seasons.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Offensively, there's little for Fuente to be excited about as depth is an issue, especially at running back. Two experienced quarterbacks decided to transfer, and the Tigers will be opening with a different starting quarterback for the fourth consecutive season. Three starting QBs have departed the past two years.

OFFENSE

First-year Memphis coach Justin Fuente takes over for Larry Porter, who was dismissed after two dismal seasons. Fuente found a team without much depth or experience at quarterback or running back.

Fuente entered his first spring shortly after quarterback Andy Summerlin, the 2011 opening-game starter, asked for his release. After spring workouts, sophomore quarterback Taylor Reed, who became the starter last fall, also asked for his release.

Fuente was left with Texas Tech transfer Jacob Karam, who had moved ahead of Reed at the end of the spring. Karam, who played sparingly at Texas Tech, has two seasons of eligibility left.

He'll be backed up by junior Will Gilchrist, who has yet to take a snap at the position. Paxton Lynch, a 6-5 incoming freshman from Deltona, Fla., likely will be in the mix.

The running game will be a question mark, too. Junior Jerrell Rhodes is clearly the best back but has been injured for much of his career. Artaves Gibson, who was the team's second-leading rusher with 316 yards, is a physical, punishing runner. Junior college transfer Jai Steib is another possibility.

Sophomore receiver Kevin Wright has big-play potential and a prototypical build (6-4, 215). Senior Marcus Rucker, who fought knee injuries a year ago, can be a go-to guy.

Fuente was in charge of potent offenses at TCU and is expected to interject excitement into a Tiger unit that passed for only 10 touchdowns last fall, last in C-USA. But he will need time.

DEFENSE

Memphis languished among the worst defensive teams in the nation, ranking 117th in total defense by allowing 491 yards per game — and that was with first-round NFL draft pick Dontari Poe anchoring the defensive front.

But Fuente was impressed by the effectiveness of his defensive line in the spring, particularly nose guard Terry Redden. At linebacker, the Tigers return Kenyata Johnson and Akeem Davis and expect sophomore Charles Harris to be a playmaker in the middle.

The secondary has been a problem for several seasons, but might improve, although promising junior Taurean Nixon, who started nine games last year, asked for his release after spring practice.

Lonnie Ballentine and Cannon Smith are returning starters at safety, and sophomore Bobby McCain is back after a solid freshman season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior placekicker Paulo Henriques and punter Tom Hornsey are back for their third seasons. Henriques struggled from long distance, as he was only 2 of 8 from 40 yards and beyond.

The Tigers were last in the conference in kickoff returns (18.0-yard average) and ninth in punt returns. Memphis hasn't returned a kickoff for a touchdown in 16 seasons.

OVERVIEW

Fuente, a former Oklahoma quarterback and TCU's co-offensive coordinator the past three years, understands the program's scholarship numbers and talent are lacking. Regardless of how organized, demanding and disciplined Fuente appears to be, it will take time for him to resurrect a program amid one of the worst stretches in its 100-year history.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Jacob Karam: The mid-year transfer looked good in the spring, which led to the departure of QB Taylor Reed, further clearing the way for Karam to be the starter. He played sparingly at Texas Tech, but he earned a degree in univtersity studies/pre-law in two and a half years, allowing him to be immediately eligible as a graduate student transfer.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	9	Jacob Karam	6-0	205	Jr.
RB	22	Jerrell Rhodes	5-10	215	Jr.
WR	**2**	**Kevin Wright***	**6-4**	**215**	**So.**
WR	27	Jamere Valentine	6-1	215	Jr.
WR	11	Tyriq Patrick	6-3	190	Fr.
TE	89	Jesse Milleson	6-4	255	Jr.
LT	**64**	**Jordan Devey***	**6-7**	**315**	**Sr.**
LG	**76**	**Nick Chartain***	**6-5**	**320**	**Jr.**
C	71	A.J. Antonescu	6-3	285	Jr.
RG	72	Antonio Foster	6-4	300	Jr.
RT	**54**	**Al Bond***	**6-5**	**295**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	25	Khiry Battle	6-0	225	Sr.
DT	94	Corey Jones	6-3	260	Jr.
NT	56	Terry Redden	6-2	285	So.
DE	95	Zach Gholson	6-4	250	Sr.
LB	**10**	**Kenyata Johnson***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	49	Charles Harris	6-2	215	So.
LB	**24**	**Akeem Davis***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
CB	37	Bakari Hollier	5-9	190	So.
CB	**21**	**Bobby McCain***	**5-11**	**180**	**So.**
SS	41	Mitch Huelsing	6-0	200	Sr.
FS	**5**	**Cannon Smith***	**6-0**	**290**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**98**	**Paulo Henriques***	**5-10**	**220**	**Sr.**
P	**43**	**Tom Hornsey***	**6-4**	**200**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 8	at Arkansas State
Sept. 15	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 22	at Duke
Oct. 6	RICE
Oct. 13	at East Carolina
Oct. 20	UCF
Oct. 27	at SMU
Nov. 3	at Marshall
Nov. 10	TULANE
Nov. 17	at UAB
Nov. 24	SOUTHERN MISS

2011 RESULTS

L	MISSISSIPPI STATE	14-59
L	at Arkansas State	3-47
W	AUSTIN PEAY	27-6
L	SMU	0-42
L	at Middle Tennessee State	31-38
L	at Rice	6-28
L	EAST CAROLINA	17-35
W	at Tulane	33-17
L	at UCF	0-41
L	UAB	35-41
L	MARSHALL	22-23
L	at Southern Miss	7-44

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.3	115
Rushing	84.0	119
Passing	190.3	85
Total	274.3	116
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.1	105
Rushing	191.6	97
Pass	299.4	120
Total	491.0	117
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+12	+1.00	7

PICKING **THE MAC**

In QB-driven MAC, Passers Determine Parity vs. Parody

The Mid-American Conference hasn't been immune to the conference shuffle. The league thought it would have two seven-team divisions when Massachusetts joined as part of its move into the Football Bowl Subdivision, but Temple made a dash back to the Big East in March.

The Owls leave after finishing among the top three in the East Division in each of the last four years, but there are still plenty of top-notch teams gunning for the conference title.

Defending champ Northern Illinois, which staged a magnificent rally to claim its first MAC title since 1983, heads into the 2012 season with the nation's longest winning streak (nine games). But the Huskies don't go into the season with league MVP Chandler Harnish, who was chosen as "Mr. Irrelevant" in the 2012 NFL Draft.

NIU might not miss Harnish as much as everyone expects. Junior Jordan Lynch, who ran almost exclusively when he subbed for Harnish the last two seasons, threw for 402 yards and four touchdowns against the second-stringers in the team's spring game.

Ohio, the East Division winner last year, accomplished almost everything on its plate last season. Frank Solich's crew earned the school's first bowl win and posted 10 victories for the first time since 1968, but the Bobcats couldn't hold on to their 20-0 halftime lead in the MAC title game.

Ohio has an excellent chance to deliver the school's first MAC title since 1968 as it retains eight defensive starters as well as 2011 third-team All-MAC quarterback Tyler Tettleton (3,960 total yards with 38 touchdowns).

Tettleton isn't the MAC's top returnee when it comes to total offense. Western Michigan gunslinger Alex Carder is back after throwing for 3,873 yards and 31 touchdowns and rushing for 630 yards and four touchdowns, though All-American wideout Jordan White and his 140 receptions have graduated.

Miami senior Zac Dysert (3,513 passing yards, 23 touchdowns) and Central Michigan senior Ryan Radcliff (3,286 passing yards, 25 touchdowns) also return.

And for those football-starved fans who became enraptured while watching Toledo put up 60-plus points on Tuesday nights in November, new Rockets head coach Matt Campbell (the 32-year-old former offensive coordinator who moved up when Tim Beckman took over at Illinois) welcomes back two-headed quarterback monster Austin Dantin and Terrance Owens.

Campbell isn't the league's only new coach. Terry Bowden, who hasn't coached at the FBS level since going 47-17-1 at Auburn from 1993-98, takes over at Akron. Bowden posted a 29-9 record at Division II North Alabama before replacing Rob Ianello as the Zips boss.

— Jeff Reynolds

MAC Conference Picks

EAST	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Ohio	Frank Solich says this could be his best defense in nine years at Ohio.	The Bobcats could use a go-to receiver to replace sixth-round pick LaVon Brazill.	Look for Ohio to be at Ford Field on Nov. 30.
2. Kent State	The Golden Flashes welcome back 18 starters from a team that won four of its last five.	What's the saying? If you have two QBs (Spencer Keith/David Fisher), you don't have one?	It's time for Kent State's second winning record in the past 25 years.
3. Miami (Ohio)	Zac Dysert and Nick Harwell (97 catches) are the league's best passing combo.	The offensive line needs an upgrade to protect Dysert and aid run game.	RedHawks get closer to 2010 MAC title form, but not enough to challenge for East.
4. Bowling Green	Loaded offense features QB Matt Schilz and 2011 Frosh of Year RB Anthon Samuels.	Must rely on too many young and/or inexperienced linebackers and defensive backs.	Going to be tough to avoid third straight losing season (first such stretch since 1995-2000).
5. Buffalo	MAC No. 2 rusher Branden Oliver (1,395 yards, 13 TDs) has four returning OL.	New DC Lou Tepper needs several more guys like LB Khalil Mack (20.5 TFLs).	If Bulls treat all foes equally (they beat Ohio and lost to NIU by 1), they'll reach .500.
6. Akron	Stephen F. Austin transfer Dalton Williams threw for 373 yards in spring game.	The Zips are woefully short in quality linemen on both sides of the ball.	Terry Bowden has discovered this can't be a quick fix.
7. Massachusetts	The 1998 Division I-AA champion joins the FBS ranks this year.	New coach Charley Molnar, a pass-game wizard, has precious few vets at the skill positions.	The Minutemen need time to make the jump from the FCS.
WEST			
1. Western Michigan	QB Alex Carder is a wondrous thrower who'll be fine with relatively young WRs.	Many defenders are high-risk/high-reward types.	Broncos get NIU and Toledo at home, so this could be the year.
2. Northern Illinois	Stellar defense includes MLB Devon Butler (missed 2011 after near-fatal gunshot wound).	Huskies must replace four studly offensive linemen.	No shocker at all if NIU makes its third consecutive MAC title-game appearance.
3. Toledo	National top 10 offense retains QBs Terrance Owens and Austin Dantin.	Offense doesn't return Eric Page (125 catches) or RB Adonis Thomas (1,071 yards).	Rockets challenge for West title if new DC Tom Matukewicz (from NIU) has immediate impact.
4. Ball State	QB Keith Henning has veteran O-line and solid skill players around him.	Cards lost two All-MAC performers from one of nation's worst defenses.	Agonizingly close to bowl bid ... but no cigar.
5. Eastern Michigan	All five O-linemen and most top runners (including Dominique Sherrer) are back.	The defense needs to take another quantum leap to become competitive.	Not quite time for school's first bowl bid since 1987.
6. Central Michigan	Senior QB Ryan Radcliff and WR Cody Wilson lead competent offense.	MAC's worst defense will only improve so much with injured players back in fold.	Chippewas need time to jell, but there's a brutal early slate (MSU, Iowa, NIU, Toledo).

Lindy's 2012 ALL-MAC Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Alex Carder	Sr.	Western Michigan
RB	Branden Oliver	Jr.	Buffalo
RB	Anthon Samuel	So.	Bowling Green
WR	Nick Harwell	Jr.	Miami (Ohio)
WR	Perez Ashford	Sr.	Northern Illinois
TE	Garrett Hoskins	Sr.	Eastern Michigan
C	Zac Kerin	Jr.	Toledo
OL	Jordan Hansel	Jr.	Ball State
OL	Brian Winters	Sr.	Kent State
OL	Eric Herman	Sr.	Ohio
OL	Dann O'Neill	Sr.	Western Michigan
AP	BooBoo Gates	Jr.	Bowling Green
K	Matthew Sims	Jr.	Northern Illinois

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Roosevelt Nix	Jr.	Kent State
DL	Sean Progar	Sr.	Northern Illinois
DL	Chris Jones	Sr.	Bowling Green
DL	Tremayne Scott	Sr.	Ohio
LB	C.J. Malauulu	So.	Kent State
LB	Dwayne Woods	Sr.	Bowling Green
LB	Khalil Mack	Jr.	Buffalo
DB	Dayonne Nunley	Jr.	Miami (Ohio)
DB	Jahleel Addae	Sr.	Central Michigan
DB	Johnnie Simon	Jr.	Western Michigan
DB	Jimmie Ward	Jr.	Northern Illinois
P	Brian Schmiedebusch	Jr.	Bowling Green

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Tyler Tettleton	Jr.	Ohio
RB	Jahwan Edwards	So.	Ball State
RB	Jawon Chisholm	So.	Akron
WR	Titus Davis	So.	Central Michigan
WR	Cody Wilson	Jr.	Central Michigan
WR	Alex Neutz	Jr.	Buffalo
C	J.D. Bales	Sr.	Ohio
OL	Eric Fisher	Sr.	Central Michigan
OL	Logan Pegram	Sr.	Northern Illinois
OL	Greg Mancz	So.	Toledo
OL	Korey Neal	Sr.	Eastern Michigan
AP	Jamill Smith	Jr.	Ball State
K	Matt Weller	Sr.	Ohio

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Austin Brown	Sr.	Miami (Ohio)
DL	Paul Hazel	Sr.	Western Michigan
DL	Nate Ollie	Jr.	Ball State
DL	Freddie Bishop	Sr.	Western Michigan
LB	Dan Molls	Sr.	Toledo
LB	Travis Freeman	Sr.	Ball State
LB	Justin Kudworth	Sr.	Eastern Michigan
DB	Marlon Pollard	Jr.	Eastern Michigan
DB	Jordan Haden	So.	Toledo
DB	Travis Carrie	Jr.	Ohio
DB	Luke Wollett	Jr.	Kent State
P	Scott Kovanda	Sr.	Ball State

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 1	Ohio at Penn State
Sept. 1	Northern Illinois vs. Iowa (Chicago)
Sept. 1	Western Michigan at Illinois
Sept. 8	Kent State at Kentucky
Sept. 15	Western Michigan at Minnesota
Sept. 15	Miami (Ohio) at Boise State
Sept. 22	Kansas at Northern Illinois
Oct. 20	Western Michigan at Kent State
Oct. 20	Cincinnati at Toledo
Oct. 27	Northern Illinois at Western Michigan
Oct. 27	Kent State at Rutgers
Nov. 14	Toledo at Northern Illinois
Nov. 14	Ohio at Ball State
Nov. 20	Akron at Toledo
Nov. 23	Ohio at Kent State

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Champion	GoDaddy.com Bowl vs. Sun Belt
MAC #2	Little Caesar's Pizza vs. Big Ten
MAC #3	Drove Humanitarian Bowl vs. WAC

NOTE: The MAC has agreements with New Mexico and BBVA Compass Bowl, if those conferences don't fill their guaranteed spots with other conferences.

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Alex Carder	QB	Sr.	Western Michigan	Sturdy build, accuracy, steady improvement get him drafted.
2. Dann O'Neill	LT	Sr.	Western Michigan	Former OG is light on his feet; top 15 OT entering 2012.
3. Dwayne Woods	ILB	Sr.	Bowling Green	At 220 pounds, could be looked at as safety/ST demon.
4. Sean Progar	DE	Sr.	Northern Illinois	NFL size at right end, beats one-on-one blocking.
5. Dan Molls	LB	Sr.	Toledo	Production is there. Biggest question will be timed speed.
6. Tremayne Scott	DE	Sr.	Ohio	Tall, long and lean; candidate for 3-4 OLB?
7. Chris Jones	DT	Sr.	Bowling Green	Power end or rotational defensive tackle with high motor.
8. Matt Weller	K	Sr.	Ohio	Plenty of leg — consistency, kickoff length keep him on fringe.
9. Nick Speller	OL	Sr.	Massachusetts	Unproven against elite talent; upside intrigues scouts.
10. Perez Ashford	WR	Sr.	Northern Illinois	Speed, hands and return skills to get a look in camp.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Tyler Tettleton QB, Ohio	Branden Oliver RB, Buffalo	Roosevelt Nix DL, Kent State	Jordan Haden FS, Toledo

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Alex Carder	Western Michigan
Strongest arm	Matt Schilz	Bowling Green
Best scrambler	Alex Gillett	Eastern Michigan
Coolest in the clutch	Tyler Tettleton	Ohio
Toughest to bring down	Jahwan Edwards	Ball State
Best hands	Nick Harwell	Miami (Ohio)
Most dangerous deep threat	Bernard Reedy	Toledo
Best run blocker	Dann O'Neill	Western Michigan
Best pass blocker	Brian Winters	Kent State
Best cover corner	Travis Carrie	Ohio
Best pass rusher	Roosevelt Nix	Kent State
Special teams demon	BooBoo Gates	Bowling Green

RANKING

68 OHIO | BOBCATS

MAC rank: 1 Record: 10-4 MAC record: 6-2 (1st, East) Stadium: Peden Stadium (24,000)

Tyler Tettleton

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

"We want to win conference championships, break into the Top 25. We've got lofty goals for this program." — Coach Frank Solich

BOBCATS at a GLANCE

COACH: Frank Solich — At Ohio: 50-40, 7 years; **OVERALL**: 108-59, 13 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Albin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jimmy Burrow

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1968
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2008
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tyler Tettleton, WR Donte Foster, TE Jordan Thompson, LT John Prior, DT Carl Jones, MLB Keith Moore, K Matt Weller

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Tettleton had a stellar season running Ohio's offense last year. He has all the intangibles and talent to become an elite quarterback in the conference. The defense has plenty of playmakers along the line and in the secondary. Travis Carrie is a shutdown cornerback in a secondary packed with returnees.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Ohio's offensive success last year was based on the productive play of talented wideouts LaVon Brazil and Riley Dunlop, who are gone. The Bobcats don't have a reliable backup to Tettleton. A tough, hard-nosed QB, he must scale back his running to stay healthy.

OFFENSE

Ohio coach Frank Solich deployed a no-huddle, fast-paced offense for the first time in his career last year.

Led by quarterback Tyler Tettleton — the son of former major leaguer Mickey Tettleton — the Bobcats rode the new offense to unprecedented heights for the program.

Tettleton threw for 3,302 yards and 28 touchdowns and rushed for 658 yards and 10 touchdowns in 2011. The junior is a strong runner and accurate passer with a high upside, according to Solich.

The quarterback must adjust to losing the bulk of his wide receiving corps that helped camouflage a suspect running game. Junior wide receiver Donte Foster and Tyler Futrell have to pick up the slack left by the departures of LaVon Brazil and Riley Dunlop. Tettleton is the leading returning rusher, but that must change in 2012. The Bobcats have to keep the bruising Tettleton healthy. Junior tailbacks Beau Blankenship and Ryan Boykin will be key players to watch if the Bobcats want to take the next level in the program's development.

Ohio returns one of the best and biggest lines in the conference to help the Pistol-based offense from experiencing a big drop-off in production.

DEFENSE

The Bobcats return six defensive starters, but they have one big hole to fill. Noah Keller, who had a team-best 116 tackles in 2011, was the heart of the defense for the last four years at middle linebacker. Junior Keith Moore gets the first crack at filling Keller's shoes.

Otherwise, the Bobcats have one of their better defenses in terms of talent and experience under Solich, who enters his eighth season at Ohio after coaching at Nebraska. The secondary is stocked with returnees and players ready to capitalize on another year of experience in the 4-3 system. The Bobcats picked off 15 passes last year, with cornerback Travis Carrie snaring a team-high four passes.

Senior nose tackle Neal Huynh can clog the middle with his size (6-3, 301). Senior defensive ends Corey Hasting and Tremayne Scott must build upon solid showings last year. The Bobcats will try to raise their sacks after racking up 22 sacks in 14 games last year

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Matt Weller is a reliable kicker inside the 40-yard line, making 19 of 20 field-goal attempts from that distance last season. But Weller's percentage dropped considerably past the 40, something that must be improved for this year. The punting job remains wide open entering the fall, with freshman Grant Venham the leading candidate.

OVERVIEW

The Bobcats have the talent and experience to compete for a third MAC East Division title in four years. Ohio is coming off its first 10-win season since 1968 and claimed the school's first-ever bowl win. A solid blend of returning skill players and a deep group of defensive and offensive linemen should bode well.

The Bobcats open at Penn State, with new coach Bill O'Brien. It could be an interesting matchup.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Chris Murray: A big-time recruit for the Bobcats. The Ohio coaching staff compares Murray's big-time playing ability to LaVon Brazil's. Murray, out of Tampa, Fla., has the talent to get plenty of playing time in his first year.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**4**	**Tyler Tettleton***	**6-0**	**200**	**Jr.**
RB	22	Beau Blankenship	5-9	202	Jr.
WR	**3**	**Donte Foster***	**6-1**	**193**	**Jr.**
WR	81	Tyler Futrell	6-0	179	Sr.
WR	17	Bakari Bussey	6-2	205	Sr.
TE	**88**	**Jordan Thompson***	**6-4**	**248**	**Sr.**
LT	74	John Prior	6-6	301	Jr.
LG	64	Vince Carlotta	6-4	289	Sr.
C	**76**	**JD Bales***	**6-5**	**307**	**Sr.**
RG	**77**	**Eric Herman***	**6-4**	**319**	**Sr.**
RT	60	Ryan McGrath	6-6	304	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	94	Corey Hasting	6-1	261	Sr.
DT	**89**	**Carl Jones***	**6-0**	**245**	**Sr.**
NT	**93**	**Neal Huynh***	**6-3**	**301**	**Sr.**
DE	**90**	**Tremayne Scott***	**6-3**	**257**	**Sr.**
LB	**34**	**Jelani Woseley***	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
LB	38	Keith Moore	6-0	219	Jr.
LB	10	A.J. Grady	6-1	198	So.
CB	2	Jamil Shaw	6-0	199	Jr.
CB	**18**	**Travis Carrie***	**6-0**	**212**	**Sr.**
SS	23	Xavier Hughes	6-1	171	Jr.
FS	**13**	**Gerald Moore***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**49**	**Matt Weller***	**6-0**	**203**	**Sr.**
P	56	Grant Venham	6-3	210	Fr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Penn State
Sept. 8	NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 15	at Marshall
Sept. 22	NORFOLK STATE
Sept. 29	at UMass
Oct. 6	BUFFALO
Oct. 13	AKRON
Oct. 27	at Miami (OH)
Nov. 1	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7	BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 14	at Ball State
Nov. 23	at Kent State

2011 RESULTS

W	at New Mexico State	44-24
W	GARDNER-WEBB	30-3
W	MARSHALL	44-7
L	at Rutgers	26-38
W	KENT STATE	17-10
L	at Buffalo	37-38
L	BALL STATE	20-23
W	at Akron	37-20
W	TEMPLE	35-31
W	at Central Michigan	43-28
W	at Bowling Green	29-28
W	MIAMI (OH)	21-14
	MAC Championship Game	
L	vs. Northern Illinois	20-23
	Famous Idaho Potato Bowl	
W	vs. Utah State	24-23

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring Offense	30.5	41
Rushing Offense	200.3	23
Passing Offense	249.0	43
Total Offense	449.3	23
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring Defense	22.1	32
Rushing Defense	142.0	52
Pass Defense	219.0	52
Total Defense	361.0	46
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	59

RANKING

84 KENT STATE | GOLDEN FLASHES

MAC rank: 2 Record: 5-7 MAC record: 4-4 (3rd, East) Stadium: Dix Stadium (25,000)

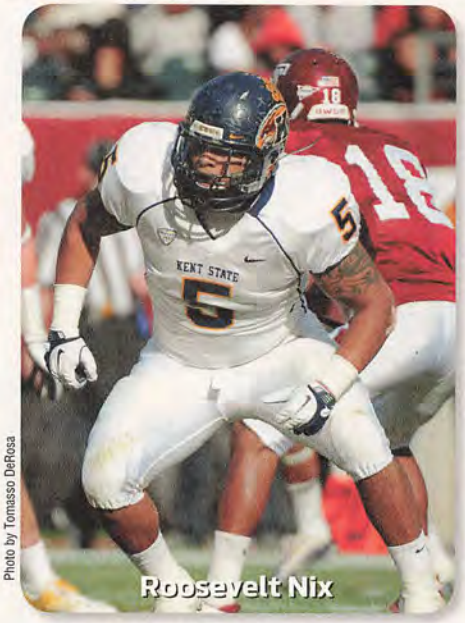


Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Roosevelt Nix

"Kent State's always had a good defense. If they can move the ball, watch out."
— Opposing MAC assistant coach

GOLDEN FLASHES at a GLANCE

COACH: Darrell Hazel — At Kent State and overall: 5-7, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Rock
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jon Heacock

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1972
LAST BOWL: 1972, Tangerine
RETURING STARTERS: 18; 9 offense, 8 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Spencer Keith, RB Traylon Durham, WR Tyshon Goode, SR Dri Archer, DT Roosevelt Nix, LB Luke Batton, SS Luke Wollet

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense returns most of last year's starters that helped the Golden Flashes stay competitive. Nix is an all-conference player that foes must double-team. The defense could be even better in 2012 with an influx of experienced starters returning.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The instability at quarterback could derail the Golden Flashes. Keith and Fisher are the two main candidates for a position that has been a problem for Kent State for years. Goode and Archer are two players the Golden Flashes are counting on put up some points.

OFFENSE

The Golden Flashes had one of the worst offenses in the country last year, finishing 114th in scoring and 119th in total offense.

The good news is Kent State got better when senior quarterback Spencer Keith bounced back from a dismal showing in the first seven games to put up respectable numbers and help the Golden Flashes win four of their final five games.

Keith, who completed 51.1 percent of his passes in 2011, isn't assured of retaining his starting position for a third straight season, however. Junior college recruit David Fisher had an impressive spring, displaying good leadership skills and athleticism.

Fisher initially struggled adjusting to taking snaps under center after playing in a shotgun offense at Palomar (Calif.) Community College. Fisher overcame a rocky spring start by bringing a new element to the offense with his ability to make plays out of the pocket.

Senior left tackle Brian Winters is the leader of a strong line that returns four starters, including three seniors.

Junior tailback Dri Archer returns to the field after sitting out last year due to academic problems. The speedy Archer can be used in a variety of ways due to his blazing 40-time of 4.3 seconds.

Wide receiver Tyshon Goode, a second-team All-MAC selection in 2010, must build on the promise he showed in his first two seasons.

DEFENSE

Kent State's defense wasn't the problem in 2011. Or the last few years. The Golden Flashes finished in the top three in nearly every major defensive category in the conference last season.

Junior defensive lineman Roosevelt Nix was hampered by an injury early last year, but his production returned by the end of the season. Nix (6-0, 244) combines with end Jake Dooley to form a disruptive duo that should equal or surpass last year's combined 27.5 tackles for losses.

Senior linebackers Luke Batton and C.J. Malauulu, the top two tacklers from a year ago, are a solid pair, but the Golden Flashes lack sufficient depth.

The secondary gets overlooked due to the production from the front seven, but that won't be the case any longer. Free safety Calvin Tiggle, strong safety Luke Wollet and cornerbacks Sidney Saulter and Norman Wolfe all return after posting big numbers last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior kicker Freddy Cortez was expected to take on the punting duties, but his status was unknown at the end of spring because of offseason knee surgery. Cortez made 13 of 17 field-goal attempts last season, including all nine inside 40 yards. Archer's return provides an immediate boost to the kick return team.

OVERVIEW

The Golden Flashes have finished with 5-7 records in three straight seasons. Getting over that hump depends on whether the late surge by the offense was a mirage or not. The quarterback issue could pose a problem all season, but Kent State has the tools to put up more points. The defense will be one of the best in the league.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB David Fisher: A rare Kent State recruit from Palomar Community College in Oceanside, Calif., Fisher is athletic but lacks ideal size — 6-0, 215 pounds. Fisher's experience gives him a good shot at playing time as the quarterback position isn't settled.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	Spencer Keith*	6-3	221	Sr.
RB	34	Traylon Durham*	6-0	250	So.
WR	8	Matt Hurdle*	6-3	185	Sr.
WR	5	Tyshon Goode*	6-1	185	Sr.
SR	1	Dri Archer	6-1	193	Jr.
TE	42	Tim Erjavec*	6-2	232	Jr.
LT	66	Brian Winters*	6-6	294	Sr.
LG	61	Josh Kline*	6-3	304	Sr.
C	75	Phil Huff	6-3	266	Jr.
RG	70	Tyler Arend*	6-5	295	Jr.
RT	65	Kent Cleveland*	6-4	300	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	47	Mark Fackler	6-4	244	Jr.
DT	5	Roosevelt Nix*	6-0	244	Jr.
NT	6	Dana Brown*	6-1	281	Sr.
DE	51	Jake Dooley*	6-3	238	Sr.
LB	10	Andre Parker	6-1	215	So.
LB	30	Luke Batton*	6-0	224	Sr.
LB	43	C.J. Malauulu*	6-1	235	Sr.
CB	11	Norman Wolfe	5-8	163	Sr.
CB	21	Sidney Saulter*	6-0	178	Sr.
SS	39	Luke Wollet*	6-1	193	Jr.
FS	8	Calvin Tiggle*	5-11	190	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	45	Freddy Cortez*	6-0	200	Sr.
P	92	Andrew Horning	6-1	205	So.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	Towson
Sept. 8	at Kentucky
Sept. 19/20	at Buffalo
Sept. 29	BALL STATE
Oct. 6	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 13	at Army
Oct. 20	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 27	at Rutgers
Nov. 3	AKRON
Nov. 10	at Miami (OH)
Nov. 17	at Bowling Green
Nov. 23	OHIO

2011 RESULTS

L	at Alabama	7-48
L	LOUISIANA	12-20
L	at Kansas State	0-37
W	SOUTH ALABAMA	33-25
L	at Ohio	10-17
L	at Northern Illinois	10-40
L	MIAMI (OH)	3-9
W	BOWLING GREEN	27-15
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	24-21
W	at Akron	35-3
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	28-22
L	at Temple	16-34

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.1	114
Rushing	108.1	107
Passing	145.4	110
Total	253.5	119
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.3	49
Rushing	129.8	35
Passing	196.3	26
Total	326.2	21
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+12	+1.00	7

RANKING

85 WESTERN MICHIGAN | BRONCOS

MAC rank: 3 Record: 7-6 MAC record: 5-3 (3rd, West) Stadium: Waldo Stadium (30,200)

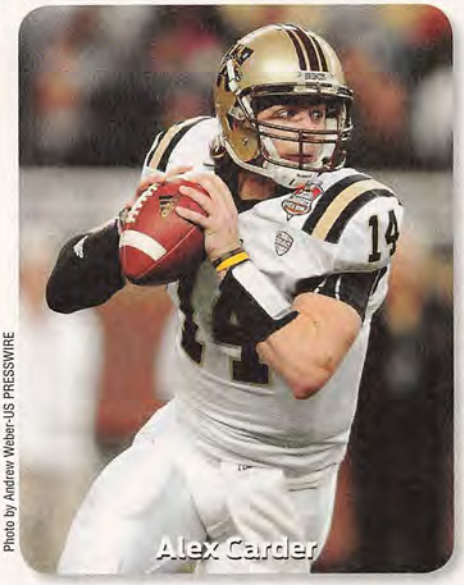


Photo by Andrew Weber-US PRESSWIRE

"The whole defense is thirsty. We all want tackles and we want to make big plays."

— Rover Johnnie Simon

BRONCOS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bill Cubit — At Western Michigan: 47-39, 7 years
OVERALL: 81-57-1, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Cubit
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rich Nagy

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1988
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 5 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Alex Carder, RB Brian Fields, WR Eric Monette, DE Paul Hazel, DT Demetris Anderson, ROV Johnnie Simon, CB Donald Celiscar

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Carder, who has the tools to play at the next level, has four starters on the offensive line to protect him. Monette has the potential to be a featured receiver, but he has to prove he can step into that bigger role and handle being the attention of opposing defenses.
PRIMARY PROBLEMS: Nagy has to find a way to make the most of what he has on defense after losing two key cogs to graduation. Whether younger players can have a big enough impact to make a new scheme work could be a major question mark.

OFFENSE

Senior Alex Carder returns as one of the MAC's top quarterbacks after throwing for 3,873 yards and 31 touchdowns last season.

He had five games with at least 400 passing yards, including 548 — with seven touchdowns — vs. Toledo. Carder has thrown for 7,207 yards in the past two seasons.

The question is: Exactly who he will be throwing to this year?

The Broncos lost 78.7 percent of their receiving production from a year ago, which moves senior receiver Eric Monette into the spotlight after he had 29 catches for 306 yards and a touchdown.

Coach Bill Cubit loaded up on receivers in his 2012 recruiting class, but redshirt freshman Kendrick Roberts and junior Josh Schaffer will have to pick up a lot of the slack. So, too, will junior tight end Clark Mussman.

The Broncos return their entire backfield, helping take some of the focus off the inexperience at receiver. Junior Brian Fields (278 yards, two touchdowns) has a slight edge to assume the starting tailback position, while Tevin Drake and Antoin Scriven also return.

DEFENSE

The task of replacing defensive tackle Drew Nowak — the MAC Defensive Player of the Year — is only the first of the challenges facing the defense.

First-year coordinator Rich Nagy is switching to a 3-3-5 scheme to take advantage of the experience he has in the secondary. Sophomore cornerback Donald Celiscar adds some big-play potential, while returning starting defensive end Paul Hazel will also have an impact.

Junior rover (a linebacker/safety position) Johnnie Simon will also be key, possessing the ability to disrupt offenses from what's likely to be a big-play position for a defense that really took a step backward in the second half of last season. Simon led the Broncos in tackles (114) last year and had 3.5 sacks — numbers he should at least be able to match this season.

Junior Travonte Boles should be able to be more productive at defensive tackle as he replaces Nowak, who had 91 tackles, including 8.5 sacks. The Broncos also must replace a top starter in linebacker Mitch Zajac, giving sophomore Devon Brant and junior Desmond Bozeman more exposure.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Broncos will have first-time starters at kicker and punter. Redshirt freshman Andrew Haldeman replaces a constant performer in John Potter, while freshman J. Schroeder assumes the punting role. The only constant left over from last year is junior long-snapper Kirk Nakama.

OVERVIEW

Following last year's 7-6 season that ended with a Little Caesar's Bowl loss to Purdue, the Broncos start the new year in wait-and-see mode. Success will depend heavily on how quickly Carder establishes rhythm with new receivers and how well the defense responds to the new 3-3-5 system. The defense has to hold up its end of the bargain more than it did last year.

Cubit may have to get some performances from some unexpected sources to keep the Broncos competitive in the MAC West.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR A.J. King – The talented wideout from Florida drew some serious recruiting attention, including from Purdue, and will have a chance in fall camp to make an impact in a receiving corps that was depleted by graduation.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**14**	**Alex Carder***	**6-2**	**224**	**Sr.**
RB	20	Brian Fields	5-8	203	Jr.
WR	86	Eric Monette	6-6	201	Sr.
WR	6	Kendrick Roberts	6-3	190	Fr.
WR	82	Josh Schaffer	6-2	211	Jr.
TE	46	Clark Mussman	6-3	232	Jr.
LT	**67**	**Terry Davisson***	**6-6**	**301**	**Jr.**
LG	**65**	**Kasimili Uitalia***	**6-2**	**292**	**Sr.**
C	**62**	**Kevin Galeher***	**6-3**	**300**	**Sr.**
RG	60	Deon Cammock	6-6	342	Jr.
RT	**68**	**Dann O'Neill***	**6-8**	**307**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	99	Paul Hazel	6-5	210	Sr.
DT	90	Demetris Anderson	6-3	300	So.
NG	**55**	**Travonte Boles***	**6-0**	**298**	**Jr.**
DE	**97**	**Freddie Bishop***	**6-4**	**253**	**Sr.**
LB	27	Trevor Ishmael	6-1	185	So.
LB	**42**	**Devon Brant***	**5-11**	**219**	**So.**
ROV	**3**	**Johnnie Simon***	**6-0**	**180**	**Jr.**
CB	**24**	**Lewis Toler***	**5-10**	**172**	**Jr.**
CB	34	Donald Celiscar	5-11	175	So.
SS	**2**	**Demetrius Pettway***	**5-10**	**188**	**Jr.**
FS	33	Justin Currie	6-3	192	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	57	Andrew Haldeman	5-10	165	Fr.
P	N/A	J. Schroeder	6-1	205	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Illinois
Sept. 8	EASTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15	at Minnesota
Sept. 22	CONNECTICUT
Sept. 29	TOLEDO
Oct. 6	MASSACHUSETTS
Oct. 13	at Ball State
Oct. 20	at Kent State
Oct. 27	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Nov. 3	at Central Michigan
Nov. 10	at Buffalo
Nov. 17	EASTERN MICHIGAN

2011 RESULTS

L	at Michigan	10-34
W	NICHOLLS STATE	38-7
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	44-14
L	at Illinois	20-23
W	at Connecticut	38-31
W	BOWLING GREEN	45-21
L	at Northern Illinois	22-51
L	at Eastern Michigan	10-14
W	BALL STATE	45-35
L	at Toledo	63-66
W	at Miami (OH)	24-21
W	AKRON	68-19
	Little Caesars Bowl	
L	vs. Purdue	32-37

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring Offense	35.3	18
Rushing Offense	121.2	94
Passing Offense	337.3	8
Total Offense	458.5	19
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring Defense	28.7	76
Rushing Defense	219.7	109
Pass Defense	215.0	47
Total Defense	434.7	99
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-3	-0.23	80

RANKING

91 NORTHERN ILLINOIS | HUSKIES

MAC rank: 4 Record: 11-3 MAC record: 7-1 (T-1st, West) Stadium: Brigham Field at Huskie Stadium (30,076)

Photo by Mike DiNovo-US PRESSWIRE

"This team is really a flip of last year's team."

— Coach Dave Doeren

HUSKIES at a GLANCE

COACH: Dave Doeren: At Northern Illinois and overall: 11-3, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Dunbar
CO-DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Jay Niemann, Ryan Nielsen

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 13, 3 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jordan Lynch, RB Akeem Daniels, WR Martel Moore, DE Sean Progar, MLB Devon Butler, SS Jimmie Ward, FS Dechane Durante

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Lynch is cut in the same mold of former QB starter Chandler Harnish. Moore has the potential to be one of the best receivers in the conference. The defense is back to the league-leading form under former coach Jerry Kill. The Huskies should stop teams this year and become more defensive-oriented.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Huskies return one starter, left guard Logan Pegram, on the offensive line. The offense has yet to find a replacement for running back Jasmin Hopkins. The defense is solid, but a lack of depth at linebacker could be an issue.

OFFENSE

The Huskies averaged 38.3 points per game the past two years under quarterback Chandler Harnish. Don't expect the Huskies to put up those numbers in 2012, but junior quarterback Jordan Lynch inherits an offense with several talented wide receivers and tight ends.

Lynch is an athletic player with the speed to make opposing defenses respect his running ability. Last year, Lynch got valuable playing time, which included leading a second-quarter touchdown drive in a bowl win over Arkansas State, after Harnish sat out a few series with an injury.

Senior left guard Logan Pegram is the lone returning starter on the line, and there was no clear-cut starter at running back coming out of the spring. Leighton Settle, Akeem Daniels and Jamal Womble will form a running back by committee until a player steps up to shoulder the brunt of the carries.

Wide receivers Martel Moore and Perez Ashford join tight ends Jason Schepler, Luke Eakes and Tim Semisch in giving Lynch a number of targets in the spread offense.

DEFENSE

The defense turned into a strength late last season after a poor start. The return of 2010 starting linebackers Devon Butler and Tyrone Clark to the field adds to a promising core of returnees. Defensive ends Sean Progar and Alan Baxter help form a deep, but inexperienced defensive line.

Butler, who had 80 tackles in 2010, is fully recovered from an off-campus shooting incident last year and participated in spring practice. Clark joins outside linebacker Jamaal Bass in giving the Huskies a talented trio in their 4-3 defense.

There's plenty of depth in the secondary, with strong safety Jimmie Ward and free safety Dechane Durante headlining the strength of the defense.

Ward, Durante and cornerbacks Rashaan Melvin, Jhony Faustin and Demetrius Stone combined to break up 27 passes and rack up 10 of NIU's 13 interceptions last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Mathew Sims added his name to the Huskies' long list of successful kickers after drilling the game-winning field goal in the Mid-American Conference championship game victory over Ohio.

Punter Ryan Neir has one of the best hang times in the conference but must work on his distance. Tommylee Lewis, a speedy and electric sophomore, can take over a game with his kickoff and punt returns.

OVERVIEW

Second-year coach Dave Doeren won NIU's first MAC title in 28 years in 2011. The Huskies, bolstered by a nine-game winning streak and back-to-back 11-3 records, broke ground in the spring for an indoor practice facility. The program is shaping up to become an annual juggernaut.

The 2012 team might experience a slight drop-off after losing key members on offense, but a schedule with six on-campus games may help the Huskies make another run at a conference title. In a reversal of last year, the offense is going to need some time to get familiar with several new faces and new offensive coordinator Mike Dunbar.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Ken Bishop: The junior college transfer is expected to be a regular in the interior of the NIU's 4-3 defense. He enrolled in school in January and worked his way up the depth chart with a solid spring.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	6	Jordan Lynch	6-0	216	Jr.
RB	23	Leighton Settle	5-9	199	Jr.
WR	**1**	**Martel Moore***	**6-0**	**183**	**Sr.**
WR	**7**	**Perez Ashford***	**5-11**	**182**	**Sr.**
SR	80	Tommylee Lewis	5-7	155	So.
TE	87	Jason Schepler	6-2	274	Sr.
LT	78	Ryan Brown	6-6	283	So.
LG	**70**	**Logan Pegram***	**6-3**	**306**	**Sr.**
C	59	Michael Gegner	6-3	283	So.
RG	66	Matt Battaglia	6-3	287	Sr.
RT	79	Matt Krempel	6-5	307	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**95**	**Sean Progar***	**6-2**	**254**	**Sr.**
DT	98	Frank Boenzi	6-1	304	So.
NG	**99**	**Nabal Jefferson***	**6-0**	**287**	**Sr.**
DE	**90**	**Alan Baxter***	**6-0**	**240**	**Sr.**
LB	36	Tyrone Clark	5-10	219	Sr.
LB	9	Devon Butler	5-10	232	Jr.
LB	**6**	**Jamaal Bass***	**5-10**	**225**	**So.**
CB	**11**	**Rashaan Melvin***	**6-2**	**193**	**Sr.**
CB	**19**	**Demetrius Stone***	**5-10**	**203**	**Sr.**
SS	**15**	**Jimmie Ward***	**5-11**	**192**	**Jr.**
FS	**21**	**Dechane Durante***	**6-2**	**196**	**So.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**99**	**Mathew Sims***	**5-9**	**181**	**Jr.**
P	**18**	**Ryan Neir***	**6-3**	**208**	**Sr.**

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Iowa (Chicago)
Sept. 8	TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 15	at Army
Sept. 22	KANSAS
Sept. 29	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 6	at Ball State
Oct. 13	BUFFALO
Oct. 20	at Akron
Oct. 27	at Western Michigan
Nov. 3	MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 14	TOLEDO
Nov. 23	at Eastern Michigan

2011 RESULTS

W	ARMY	49-26
L	at Kansas	42-45
L	WISCONSIN	7-49
W	CAL POLY	47-30
L	at Central Michigan	41-48
W	KENT STATE	40-10
W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	51-22
W	at Buffalo	31-30
W	at Toledo	63-60
W	at Bowling Green	45-14
W	BALL STATE	41-38
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	18-12
	MAC Championship Game	
W	vs. Ohio	23-20
	GoDaddy.com Bowl	
W	vs. Arkansas State	38-20

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring Offense	38.3	12
Rushing Offense	234.1	12
Passing Offense	241.9	51
Total Offense	476.0	11
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring Defense	30.3	85
Rushing Defense	167.4	73
Pass Defense	247.9	89
Total Defense	415.2	88
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 6	+ 0.43	29

RANKING

95 TOLEDO | ROCKETS

MAC rank: 5 Record:9-4 MAC record: 7-1 (T-1st, West) Stadium: Glass Bowl (26,248)

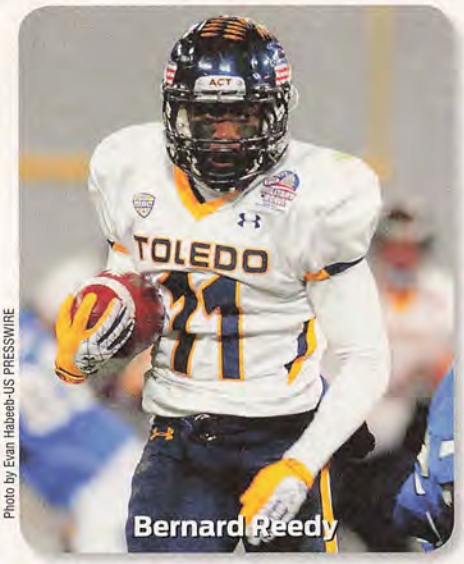


Photo by Evan Habeeb-US PRESSWIRE

"When you have two very experienced and capable guys at quarterback, it just increases your ability as an offense to make a lot of good things happen." — Coach Matt Campbell

ROCKETS at a GLANCE

COACH: Matt Campbell — At Toledo and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Louis Ayeni, Jason Candle
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Matukewicz

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 4 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Austin Dantin, QB Terrance Owens, RB David Fluellen, WR Bernard Reedy, WR Dwight Macon, LB Dan Molls, DL T.J. Fatinikun, S Jermaine Robinson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Rockets have the benefit of momentum and the comfort of continuity; Campbell, who was the team's popular offensive coordinator, almost immediately moved into the head coach role after Tim Beckman left for Illinois. Toledo has multiple playmakers on offense and on all three levels of defense.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Toledo cannot afford an injury at running back and receiver, where depth is thin. The Rockets gave up more than 400 yards per game and nearly 32 points an outing in 2011, and can't continue putting their offense in a position where it has to score on nearly every possession.

OFFENSE

The Rockets will stick with the two-headed quarterback approach that has worked well in the past, using senior Austin Dantin and junior Terrance Owens in co-starting roles. They offer different looks and bring varied talents to the offense.

David Fluellen appears ready to assume the workhorse post at tailback after solid backup duty in the past couple of seasons.

Instead of wasting backup quarterback Dwight Macon's talents on the sidelines, the Rockets moved him to wide receiver in the spring, and Macon wowed everyone. He will join proven playmaker Bernard Reedy to give Toledo plenty of pop on the outside.

The real key is the line, which is where new head coach Matt Campbell focused his work in the past three years as coordinator and position coach.

The group is undergoing some reshaping around center Zac Kerin and guard Greg Mancz. Experience gained by Jeff Myers, A.J. Lindeman and Josh Hendershot as backups should allow them to move in and keep the group humming.

DEFENSE

The combination of injuries and fluctuations in performance over the past couple of seasons allowed the Rockets to give numerous players valuable experience. The benefits will be enjoyed this season as Toledo replaces six starters with capable and battle-hardened players.

The unit up front is deep and nasty, led by pass rushing phenom T.J. Fatinikun at end when he completes his recovery from an elbow injury that cut short his 2011 season. He will be joined by Danny Farr, Elijah Jones, Ben Pike, Jayrone Elliott and Christian Smith to make things tough for the opposition.

The linebackers are another solid unit, with tackling machine Dan Molls leading the gifted group that includes Robert Bell, Vladimir Emilien and Ray Bush.

The secondary is becoming more settled. Campbell is comfortable with senior safety Jermaine Robinson, who is back for a fourth year as a starter, where he will be joined by senior Mark Singer, back after an injury-forced redshirt season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jeremiah Detmer returns to handle all of the placekicking after proving himself with his distance work last season. Detmer had a strong spring and solidified his hold on the overall placekicking job.

Junior Vince Penza has the inside track on retaining the punting role after his clutch work in the Military Bowl win over Air Force, but junior college transfer Brad Dunavant enrolled early and is pressing Penza for the starting job.

OVERVIEW

Matt Campbell, the youngest FBS head coach in the country at just 32, is not out to prove he can remake the formula for success at Toledo. Campbell inherits a solid group of veterans and a program that Tim Beckman left in great shape when he departed for Illinois. The Rockets have been banging on the door the past two years, going 8-5 and 9-4; they should make another run at the conference championship game this time around.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Corey Jones: When star receiver and return man Eric Page left early for the NFL, it left Toledo in need of a dynamic playmaker. Jones was that kind of performer in the Pennsylvania high school ranks, scoring 39 touchdowns while displaying a wide array of skills.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**4**	**Austin Dantin***	**6-2**	**200**	**Sr.**
RB	22	David Fluellen	6-0	215	Jr.
WR	8	James Green	6-3	200	Jr.
WR	**11**	**Bernard Reedy***	**5-9**	**175**	**Jr.**
WR	17	Dwight Macon	6-0	200	So.
TE	13	Cordale Scott	6-4	220	Sr.
LT	56	Josh Hendershot	6-4	275	So.
LG	54	Jeff Myers	6-3	280	So.
C	**67**	**Zac Kerin***	**6-5**	**294**	**Jr.**
RG	**75**	**Greg Mancz***	**6-5**	**280**	**So.**
RT	60	A.J. Lindeman	6-6	300	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**23**	**T.J. Fatinikun***	**6-2**	**250**	**Sr.**
DT	92	Danny Farr	6-5	295	Sr.
NT	98	Elijah Jones	6-2	295	Jr.
DE	84	Christian Smith	6-2	260	Jr.
LB	**32**	**Dan Molls***	**6-1**	**222**	**Sr.**
LB	**38**	**Robert Bell***	**6-0**	**227**	**Sr.**
LB	25	Vladimir Emilien	6-1	204	Jr.
CB	26	Keith Suggs	5-10	175	So.
CB	6	Byron Best	5-9	200	Sr.
SS	**29**	**Jermaine Robinson***	**6-3**	**188**	**Sr.**
FS	43	Mark Singer	6-1	194	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**85**	**Jeremiah Detmer***	**5-8**	**170**	**So.**
P	**35**	**Vince Penza***	**6-1**	**201**	**Jr.**

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Arizona
Sept. 8	at Wyoming
Sept. 15	BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 22	COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 29	at Western Michigan
Oct. 6	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 13	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 20	CINCINNATI
Oct. 27	at Buffalo
Nov. 6	BALL STATE
Nov. 14	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 20	AKRON

2011 RESULTS

W	NEW HAMPSHIRE	58-22
L	at Ohio State	22-27
L	BOISE STATE	15-40
L	at Syracuse (OT)	30-33
W	at Temple	36-13
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	54-16
W	at Bowling Green	28-21
W	MIAMI (OH)	49-28
L	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	60-63
W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	66-63
W	at Central Michigan	44-17
W	at Ball State	45-28
	Military Bowl	
W	vs. Air Force	42-41

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring Offense	42.2	8
Rushing Offense	213.6	17
Passing Offense	267.7	30
Total Offense	481.3	9
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring Defense	31.7	94
Rushing Defense	132.8	41
Pass Defense	268.8	105
Total Defense	401.5	76
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+16	+1.23	3

RANKING 100

BALL STATE | CARDINALS

MAC rank: 6 Record: 6-6 MAC record: 4-4 (T-4th, West) Stadium: Scheumann Stadium (22,500)

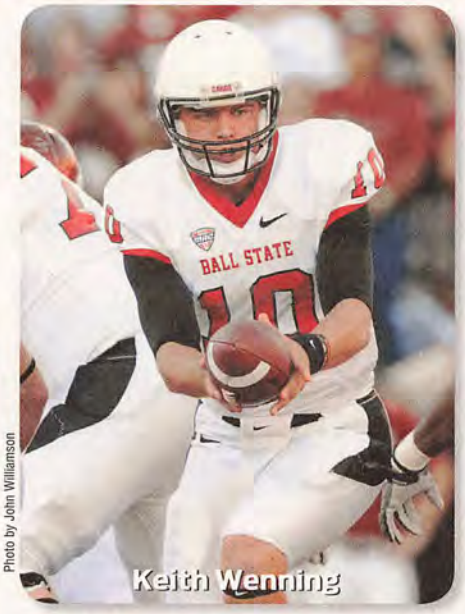


Photo by John Williamson

"We challenged our receivers to step up and be those (big-play) guys for us."

— Coach Pete Lembo, on spring practice

CARDINALS at a GLANCE

COACH: Pete Lembo — At Ball State: 6-6, 1 year
OVERALL: 85-42, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rich Skrosky
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Bateman

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1996
LAST BOWL: 2008, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Keith Wenning, TB Jahwan Edwards, MLB Travis Freeman, CB Jason Pinkston, DT Nathan Ollie

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Ball State will have to be carried by its offense. The unit made nice strides in its first season under Lembo, and more of the playbook is being installed this season. Good special teams play is always a bonus, and the Cardinals have units that should rank among the best in the MAC.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Defense is a concern again this year. The Cardinals need consistent play from two new ends, and their two safeties will be first-time starters. The unit has to tackle better and limit big plays, areas that were a major issue a year ago.

OFFENSE

Ball State was somewhat limited on offense last year, as its young players tried to absorb the teachings of new coach Pete Lembo and his coaching staff.

There should be fewer shackles on the attack this season, as Ball State's goal during the offseason was to transform the offense to one that would pack a bigger punch and create those game-changing plays that came too infrequently last season.

The Cardinals showed some of that kind of improvement during the spring game, with four passes that combined to produce 216 yards.

Much of the progress can be traced to the experience of junior quarterback Keith Wenning, who will start in 2012 for the third straight year. He has a big, experienced offensive line in front of him and receiving targets in Willie Snead, Jamill Smith, Connor Ryan, and Jack Tomlinson, who show explosiveness.

The multiple, no-huddle offense will feature lots of passing, but a nice stable of running backs, headed by Jahwan Edwards, helps to give the Cardinals diversity in their attack.

DEFENSE

The Cardinals had the worst defense in the Mid-American Conference last season, ranking at or near the bottom in every significant category. Some of the issues were related to injuries, but for the most part, the group was not fundamentally sound.

To complicate the process in 2012, Ball State lost three key pieces of its defense with the graduation of safeties Sean Baker and Josh Howard, and the academic ineligibility of outside linebacker Aaron Morris. Baker and Morris combined to make 210 tackles last year.

One of the main points of emphasis will be a stronger pass rush. The Cardinals' defensive line generated only 12 sacks last year. Nathan Ollie is a strong rusher at defensive tackle, and linebackers Tony Martin and Kenneth Lee will be counted on to provide pressure from the outside.

Middle linebacker Travis Freeman can make plays sideline to sideline, and he enters his senior year with 336 career tackles.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ball State had one of the top special teams units in the MAC last year, and much of that was helped by the consistency of returning kicker Steven Schott and punter Scott Kovanda.

Schott was among the most accurate kickers in the MAC, making 15 of 20 field-goal attempts. Kovanda had his best year in 2011, averaging 43.5 yards a punt.

OVERVIEW

Ball State was a surprise team last year with a 6-6 record, narrowly missing out on a bowl bid (it was one of two eligible teams not selected). With a veteran squad returning, the Cardinals figure to improve, but their record might not show it. Ball State has a difficult non-conference slate with South Florida at home and road games against Clemson, Army and Indiana. The Cardinals' MAC schedule includes two of the East Division's best teams (Ohio and Miami).

TOP NEWCOMERS

SS Chris Pauling: An early enrollee, Pauling made an immediate impact this spring at a position that lacked a starter and depth. Coach Pete Lembo said at the end of spring practice that it looked as if Pauling had been at Ball State for three years instead of three months.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	**Keith Wenning***	6-3	224	Jr.
RB	38	**Jahwan Edwards***	5-10	230	So.
WR	3	Willie Snead	5-11	191	So.
WR	2	Jamill Smith	5-8	138	Jr.
WR	81	Connor Ryan	6-1	188	Jr.
TE	88	**Zane Fakes***	6-3	227	Jr.
QT	77	**Austin Holtz***	6-5	3-4	Sr.
QG	79	**Kitt O'Brien***	6-5	319	Sr.
C	73	**Dan Manick***	6-4	286	Sr.
SG	70	**Jordan Hansel***	6-4	326	Jr.
ST	72	Cameron Lowry	6-6	293	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	5	Jonathan Newsome	6-3	245	Jr.
DT	92	**Nathan Ollie***	6-1	296	Jr.
NT	97	Donovan Jarrett	6-3	317	Sr.
DE	52	Nick Miles	6-2	259	So.
LB	47	**Tony Martin***	6-0	222	Sr.
LB	8	**Travis Freeman***	6-0	238	Sr.
LB	58	Kenneth Lee	6-2	219	Sr.
CB	24	**Jeffery Garrett***	5-9	178	Jr.
CB	6	**Jason Pinkston***	6-1	185	Sr.
SS	25	Chris Pauling	5-9	186	Fr.
FS	29	Brian Jones	5-10	194	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	14	**Steven Schott***	6-0	171	Sr.
P	18	**Scott Kovanda***	6-3	207	Sr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8	at Clemson
Sept. 15	at Indiana
Sept. 22	SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 29	at Kent State
Oct. 6	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 13	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 20	at Central Michigan
Oct. 27	at Army
Nov. 6	at Toledo
Nov. 14	OHIO
Nov. 23	at Miami (OH)

2011 RESULTS

W	INDIANA	27-20
L	at South Florida	7-37
W	BUFFALO	28-25
W	ARMY	48-21
L	at Oklahoma	6-62
L	TEMPLE	0-42
W	at Ohio	23-20
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	31-27
L	at Western Michigan	35-45
W	at Eastern Michigan	33-31
L	at Northern Illinois	38-41
L	TOLEDO	28-45

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.3	72
Rushing	138.4	77
Passing	241.0	53
Total	379.4	68

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.7	103
Rushing	226.0	113
Pass	284.3	115
Total	510.3	119

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-1	-0.08	67

RANKING

104 MIAMI (OHIO) | REDHAWKS

MAC rank: 7 | Record: 4-8 | MAC record: 3-5 (T-4th, East) | Stadium: Yager Stadium (24,286)

Photo by John Williamson

"Zac does a great job of keeping his composure to find his receivers when there's pressure."
— Coach Don Treadwell

REDHAWKS at a GLANCE

COACH: Don Treadwell — At Miami and overall: 4-8, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Klacik
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Peterson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: 2010, GoDaddy.com
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 8 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Zac Dysert, WR Nick Harwell, WR Andy Cruse, DE Jason Semmes, DT Austin Brown, CB Dayonne Nunley, S Pat Hinkel

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Dysert and Harwell have great chemistry and form a lethal duo in Miami's spread offense. Dysert is one of the nation's most unheralded quarterbacks, while Harwell is a dynamic player capable of taking over a game. A revamped defensive coaching staff brought energy and enthusiasm that might help a group with seven returning starters.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line gave up 47 sacks in 2011. There's been some movement along the line during the spring; whether that translates into a more cohesive unit could determine the success of Miami's season. The schedule is brutal, with five of the first seven games on the road.

OFFENSE

Senior quarterback Zac Dysert, a three-year starter, is billed by Miami as "college football's best-kept secret" heading into the 2012 season.

His national name recognition is several rungs below that of Matt Barkley or Landry Jones, but Dysert deserves the "best-kept secret" title based on his gaudy career statistics of 8,530 passing yards, 48 touchdown passes, and a 64-percent completion rate.

Dysert is a gunslinger in Miami's spread offense, but the RedHawks' offensive line had trouble creating holes to develop a consistent running game, surrendering a whopping 47 sacks in 2011.

Coach Don Treadwell emphasized improving the running game to make the offense a two-dimensional threat after the RedHawks averaged 2.4 yards per carry last season. Another area that the RedHawks worked on was finding a consistent tight end threat, as Matt Kennedy was moved from right tackle to tight end.

Junior wide receiver Nick Harwell, who caught 97 passes for 1,425 yards and nine touchdowns in 2011, is a big-time threat capable of making post-season award lists. Not only do Dysert and Harwell form a lethal combination, but the RedHawks possess a deep reservoir of returning talent at wide receiver to rack up yardage.

DEFENSE

The RedHawks brought in three new defensive coaches, including coordinator Jay Peterson, to help foster a tougher attitude. The defense posted solid numbers in 2011, ranking 24th in the country in pass defense, 39th in scoring defense and 48th in total defense.

But the RedHawks intercepted just 10 passes after recording 21 picks in 2010. They also allowed a whopping 55 percent fourth-down conversion rate.

The 4-3 defense is strong at defensive line because of tackles Austin Brown and Mike Johns. The RedHawks are sketchy at linebacker with strong safety Pat Hinkle trying his hand at weakside linebacker late in the spring.

In the secondary, cornerback Dayonne Nunley is an all-conference performer.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The RedHawks have to improve in all facets on special teams. Harwell failed to have a punt return longer than 14 yards. Nunley is an explosive kick returner after averaging 23 yards per return last season.

Kicker Mason Krysinski attempted all six of Miami's field-goal attempts in 2011, making two, and must battle for his position. Punter Zac Murphy boomed seven punts 50 yards or longer last year.

OVERVIEW

Treadwell overhauled the defensive staff despite a productive showing last year. The RedHawks plan on showing more aggression and forcing more turnovers. The combination of Dysert and Harwell is electric, but the offense lacks a proven tailback and tight end.

The RedHawks didn't beat a winning team last year, lost their first four games, finished the season with three straight defeats and had trouble winning close games. Sure, things could change with better health and chemistry along the offensive line, but the schedule is difficult and making progress won't be easy.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Jack Snowball: Might get a chance to get quality carries with a good showing in fall camp because of Miami's issues with health and depth at the position. Snowball rushed for 2,594 yards and 31 touchdowns at Wadsworth High School in Ohio last year. He never fumbled in his prep career.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**4**	**Zac Dysert***	**6-4**	**219**	**Sr.**
RB	46	Justin Semmes	6-2	226	Jr.
WR	**8**	**Nick Harwell***	**6-1**	**190**	**Jr.**
WR	**15**	**Andy Cruse***	**6-4**	**215**	**Sr.**
WR	**12**	**Willie Culpepper***	**5-9**	**155**	**So.**
TE	82	Matt Kennedy	6-5	248	Sr.
LT	71	Zach Lewis	6-6	275	So.
LG	**75**	**Marcus Matthews***	**6-3**	**310**	**So.**
C	**52**	**Joseph Williams***	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
RG	**67**	**John Anevski***	**6-3**	**285**	**Jr.**
RT	**72**	**Brad Bednar***	**6-4**	**292**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	57	Wes Williams	6-3	244	Jr.
DT	**90**	**Austin Brown***	**6-2**	**270**	**Sr.**
NT	**94**	**Mike Johns***	**6-4**	**271**	**Sr.**
DE	**93**	**Jason Semmes***	**6-3**	**233**	**Sr.**
LB	**30**	**Evan Harris***	**6-0**	**223**	**Sr.**
LB	38	Tyler Tucker	6-2	217	So.
LB	32	Jaytee Swanson	6-2	218	Sr.
CB	**3**	**Dayonne Nunley***	**5-8**	**180**	**Jr.**
CB	**6**	**D.J. Brown***	**6-1**	**180**	**Sr.**
SS	**37**	**Pat Hinkel***	**6-1**	**199**	**Sr.**
FS	35	Brison Burris	5-10	179	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**39**	**Mason Krysinski***	**6-3**	**203**	**Jr.**
P	**45**	**Zac Murphy***	**6-0**	**199**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Ohio State
Sept. 8	SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15	at Boise State
Sept. 22	MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 29	at Akron
Oct. 6	at Cincinnati
Oct. 13	at Bowling Green
Oct. 27	OHIO
Nov. 3	at Buffalo
Nov. 10	KENT STATE
Nov. 17	at Central Michigan
Nov. 23	BALL STATE

2011 RESULTS

L	at Missouri	6-17
L	at Minnesota	23-29
L	BOWLING GREEN	23-37
L	CINCINNATI	0-27
W	ARMY	35-28
W	at Kent State	9-3
L	at Toledo	28-49
W	BUFFALO	41-13
W	AKRON	35-3
L	at Temple	21-24
L	WESTERN MICHIGAN	21-24
L	at Ohio	14-21

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.3	103
Rushing	73.8	120
Passing	299.1	14
Total	372.9	75
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.9	39
Rushing	168.5	75
Passing	195.2	24
Total	363.7	48
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-4	-0.33	85

RANKING

109 BOWLING GREEN | FALCONS

MAC rank: 8 Record: 5-7 MAC record:3-5 (T-4th, East) Stadium: Perry Stadium (24,000)

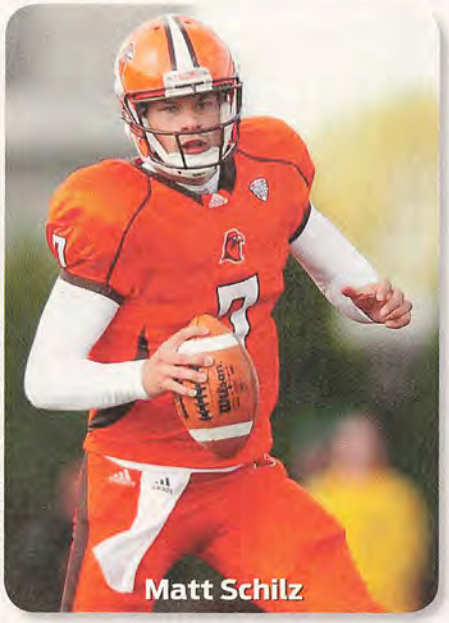


Photo Courtesy of Andrew Weber-US PRESSWIRE

"We weren't good enough on defense last year. Some (opponents) might be glad that we got so many starters back." — Coach Dave Clawson

FALCONS at a GLANCE

COACH: Dave Clawson — At Bowling Green: 14-23, 3 years; **OVERALL:** 72-72, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Warren Ruggiero
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Elko

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1992
LAST BOWL: 2007, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Matt Schilz, RB Anthon Samuel, TE Alex Bayer, WR Je'Ron Stokes, LT Fahn Cooper, DT Chris Jones, LB Dwayne Woods, P Brian Schmiedebusch

PRIMARY STRENTHS: Schilz has the potential to become an elite quarterback in the conference. Samuel is coming off a big freshman year, but has plenty of competition for carries. The offensive line is a strength, and several incoming skill players could bolster the offense.
PRIMARY PROBLEMS: Creating and limiting turnovers is an area in which the Falcons have to improve. The Falcons can't blame inexperience or youth for their misgivings on defense. Bowling Green likes to throw the ball, but the wide receivers group was decimated by offseason losses. The kicking game is a big question mark.

OFFENSE

Junior quarterback Matt Schilz is bigger and stronger and has a good grasp of the offense entering his junior season.

The 6-2, 211-pound Schilz, who threw for 3,024 yards and 28 touchdowns in 2011, won't have to deal with the myriad problems along the offensive line that hampered the Falcons' attack in the past two years. Schilz worked on limiting his mistakes and not throwing interceptions in the spring.

The line, led by left guard Dominic Flewellyn and right guard Jordan Roussos, returns five players who started at least six games last year, and can go eight or nine deep.

The Falcons are loaded at running back with Anthon Samuel, the 2011 Mid-American Conference Freshman of the Year, and Jordan Hopgood. An X-factor is tailback Andre Givens. The former Pittsburgh signee is enrolled in school, attempting to gain eligibility for the fall semester.

The Falcons, a pass-happy team that attempted 429 passes in 2011, will have an entirely new cast of wide receivers. Michigan-transfer Je'Ron Stokes and junior college recruit Michael Allen should get plenty of balls thrown their way.

DEFENSE

The Falcons gave up 27 or more points in six of their eight league games last season. It might be good news or bad news that Bowling Green brings back so many starters.

The Falcons should improve based on the simple fact that several young players received another year of experience in the 4-2-5 defensive system. Senior defensive tackle Chris Jones is one of the best defensive players in the conference. The depth at defensive end and the tackle positions will allow the Falcons to rotate players and keep them fresh late in game.

Middle linebacker Dwayne Woods had 111 tackles in 2011, but the Falcons lack quality reserves at linebacker. The secondary is young with junior Jerry "BooBoo" Gates the lone expected upperclassmen starter.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Falcons return all of their starters for the first time in four years, but expect open competition at the kicking and punt returner positions. Punter Brian Schmiedebusch averaged a robust 45.3 yards per punt last year — the fifth-best in the country. Schmiedebusch boomed 19 punts over 50 yards and had 18 downed inside the opponent's 20-yard line.

OVERVIEW

Dave Clawson finally gets to show his coaching acumen. In his first three years, the Falcons were hurt by insufficient numbers at key positions, injuries along the offensive line and high turnover rate on the roster.

The Falcons don't have those issues coming into the 2012 season. The offense is brimming with talent, but will miss wide receiver Kamar Jorden. Schilz has to lower his interception total, while the young defense holds the key to how big of a leap in the standings the Falcons can make. The Falcons must take advantage of a schedule that's one of the easiest in the conference.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Je'Ron Stokes: The Michigan transfer didn't get many balls thrown his way in two years in Ann Arbor. Stokes, a former four-star Rivals.com recruit, caught three passes for 27 yards at Michigan.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	7	**Matt Schilz***	6-2	211	Jr.
RB	6	Anthon Samuel	5-11	183	So.
FB	89	Tyler Beck	6-2	247	Jr.
WR	83	Shaun Joplin	6-2	197	Jr.
WR	16	Je'Ron Stokes	6-0	196	Jr.
TE	82	**Alex Bayer***	6-4	256	Jr.
LT	79	Fahn Cooper	6-4	294	Fr.
LG	52	**Dominic Flewellyn***	6-3	291	Jr.
C	71	**Chip Robinson***	6-5	310	Sr.
RG	73	**Jordon Roussos***	6-4	296	Sr.
RT	75	Kyle Bryant	6-5	306	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	46	Charlie Walker	6-2	228	So.
DT	91	**Chris Jones***	6-1	295	Sr.
NG	93	Ted Ouellet	6-3	273	Jr.
DE	92	Zach Colvin	6-2	271	So.
LB	33	**Paul Swan***	6-0	226	Jr.
LB	5	**Dwayne Woods***	5-11	227	Sr.
LB	34	Brian Sutton	5-11	186	So.
CB	8	**Cameron Truss***	5-10	189	So.
CB	12	**DeVon McKoy***	5-10	189	So.
SS	24	**BooBoo Gates***	5-10	209	Jr.
FS	15	**Ryland Ward***	5-9	204	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	49	**Stephen Stein***	5-11	186	Sr.
P	95	**Brian Schmiedebusch***	6-4	214	Jr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Florida
Sept. 8	IDAHO
Sept. 15	at Toledo
Sept. 22	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 29	RHODE ISLAND
Oct. 6	at Akron
Oct. 13	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 20	at Massachusetts
Oct. 27	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7	at Ohio
Nov. 17	KENT STATE
Nov. 23	vs. Buffalo (Columbus, OH)

2011 RESULTS

W	at Idaho	32-15
W	MORGAN STATE	58-13
L	WYOMING	27-28
W	at Miami (OH)	37-23
L	at West Virginia	10-55
L	at Western Michigan	21-45
L	TOLEDO	21-28
W	TEMPLE	13-10
L	at Kent State	15-27
L	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	14-45
L	OHIO	28-29
W	at Buffalo	42-28

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.5	63
Rushing	122.9	91
Passing	261.6	31
Total	384.5	62

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.8	77
Rushing	203.4	104
Pass	202.6	34
Total	406.0	79

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-13	-1.08	116

RANKING

112 BUFFALO | BULLS

MAC rank: 9 Record: 3-9 MAC record: 2-6 (6th, East) Stadium: UB Stadium (29,013)

Photo by Jeanine Leech/Icon SMI

Khalil Mack

"Our offense will have the opportunity to be highly productive."
— Coach Jeff Quinn

BULLS at a GLANCE

COACH: Jeff Quinn — At Buffalo and overall: 5-19, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Alex Wood
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lou Tepper

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST BOWL: 2008, International
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Alex Zordich, RB Branden Oliver, WR Alex Neutz, OL Gokhan Ozkan, LB Khalil Mack, LB Lee Skinner, DL Steven Means

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Bulls like their offensive potential, since they return two quarterbacks with starting experience in Zordich and senior Jerry Davis, and add exciting freshman Joe Licata to the mix. Oliver is a powerhouse who had 1,395 yards and eight 100-yard games last season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Buffalo was hit hard by graduation losses at wide receiver and doesn't have a senior at the position. Neutz comes back from a season-ending injury and needs to lead a young group that will have to fast-track its development to give the offense some balance and punch through the air.

OFFENSE

The Bulls like junior quarterback Alex Zordich's running ability, plus his combination of size and strength, while freshman Joe Licata proved in spring ball he is a gifted thrower and a viable second option.

What will make the Buffalo quarterbacks better is the track record of junior running back Branden Oliver, a workhorse who set school records with his 306 carries for nearly 1,400 yards last season.

Oliver blends speed, balance and strength in his 5-8, 204-pound frame that pounded out 235 yards against Akron last season.

The passing game will rely on junior Alex Neutz to provide a big-play threat since heavy graduation losses leave him as the likely go-to guy. Sophomore Devon Hughes looks ready to assume a lead role here, too.

Junior tight end Jake Reeder is healed after a knee injury slowed him in 2011, while the offensive line returns four starters. Seniors Graham Whinery and Gokhan Ozkan are the anchors.

DEFENSE

New defensive coordinator Lou Tepper should get pop from the group at linebacker.

The former Illinois head coach has a prime talent in junior Khalil Mack, who won first-team All-MAC honors last season as a sophomore, forcing five fumbles and finishing third in the country with 20.5 tackles for loss.

Mack is joined in the linebacker corps by sophomore Lee Skinner, who had 80 stops as a freshman in 2011, and by productive senior Scott Pettigrew.

The line expects big-play production from senior Steven Means, whose 12 career sacks are his calling card. Junior Colby Way relies on a high-motor approach that led him to 49 stops last season, tops among the Buffalo defensive linemen.

The secondary moves into 2012 poised to improve on its tackling and ability to force turnovers. Safety Isaac Baugh is the lone senior and brings a physical edge to the unit. Junior Najja Johnson and sophomore Cortney Lester are solid at the corners after a season as starters.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore Patrick Clarke is the returning starter at kicker and one of the leading candidates to fill the vacancy at punter. Clarke won the kicking job late in the 2011 season and went perfect over the final three games, hitting all 10 extra points and all six field-goal tries.

He will be the punter, at least on an interim basis, unless incoming recruit Tyler Grassman demonstrates he can take that job away.

OVERVIEW

As Jeff Quinn enters his third season at the helm, he will have to keep his team in the middle of things in the MAC East and demonstrate enough improvement to show that the Bulls are headed in the right direction. A few playmakers on both sides of the ball should keep the Bulls competitive in most of conference games, but they are not ready to challenge for a division title.

TOP NEWCOMER

OL Jaden Cotton: The offensive line was an area in need of an upgrade, and the 6-6, 330-pound Cotton has the potential to address that right away. The Bulls love his physicality and expect his strength to soon be off the charts.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	15	Alex Zordich	6-2	224	Jr.
RB	**32**	**Branden Oliver***	**5-8**	**204**	**Jr.**
WR	**19**	**Alex Neutz***	**6-4**	**209**	**Jr.**
WR	85	Cordero Dixon	6-0	189	So.
WR	18	Fred Lee	6-2	204	Jr.
TE	81	Jimmy Gordon	6-4	260	Jr.
LT	**50**	**Andre Davis***	**6-4**	**305**	**So.**
LG	**56**	**Jasen Carlson***	**6-3**	**307**	**Jr.**
C	71	Trevor Sales	6-1	314	Jr.
RG	**55**	**Graham Whinery***	**6-4**	**297**	**Sr.**
RT	**79**	**Gokhan Ozkan***	**6-7**	**330**	**Sr.**

DEFENSE

DE	**40**	**Steven Means***	**6-3**	**260**	**Sr.**
NG	97	Wyatt Cahill	6-4	285	Sr.
DE	34	Colby Way	6-4	270	Jr.
LB	**46**	**Khalil Mack***	**6-3**	**244**	**Jr.**
LB	**36**	**Lee Skinner***	**6-2**	**237**	**So.**
LB	**44**	**Jaleel Verser***	**6-6**	**239**	**Sr.**
LB	47	Imani Chatman	6-3	222	Sr.
CB	**22**	**Najja Johnson***	**6-0**	**194**	**Jr.**
CB	**4**	**Cortney Lester***	**6-0**	**184**	**So.**
SS	**8**	**Isaac Baugh***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
FS	38	Witney Sherry	6-0	195	So.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	**45**	**Patrick Clarke***	**6-2**	**205**	**So.**
P	45	Patrick Clarke	6-2	205	So.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Georgia
Sept. 8	MORGAN STATE
Sept. 19/20	KENT STATE
Sept. 29	at Connecticut
Oct. 6	at Ohio
Oct. 13	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 20	PITTSBURGH
Oct. 27	TOLEDO
Nov. 3	MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 10	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 17	at Massachusetts
Nov. 23	vs. Bowling Green (Coumbus, OH)

2011 RESULTS

L	at Pittsburgh	16-35
W	STONY BROOK	35-7
L	at Ball State	25-28
L	CONNECTICUT	3-17
L	at Tennessee	10-41
W	OHIO	38-37
L	at Temple	0-34
L	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	30-31
L	at Miami (OH)	13-41
L	at Eastern Michigan	17-30
W	AKRON	51-10
L	BOWLING GREEN	28-42

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.2	97
Rushing	155.0	60
Passing	210.2	76
Total	365.2	80

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.4	83
Rushing	181.2	86
Pass	203.7	36
Total	384.8	63

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-2	-0.17	78

RANKING

115 AKRON | ZIPS

MAC rank: 10 Record: 1-11 MAC record: 0-8 (6th, East) Stadium: InfoCision Stadium (30,000)

Photo by Kirk Irwin/Getty Images

Jawon Chisholm

"We don't have (65) people who fit into our future, I believe."
— Terry Bowden, on his spring roster

ZIPS at a GLANCE

COACH: Terry Bowden — At Akron: 1st year;
OVERALL: 140-62-2, 18 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Terry Bowden
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chuck Amato

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST BOWL: 2005, Motor City
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Dalton Williams, RB Jawon Chisholm, WR Marquelo Suel, WR Keith Sconiers, DE Albert Presley, FS Devonte Morgan, K A.J. Fox

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Chisholm embraced the challenge from the new coaching staff to become a more versatile tailback. The Zips have talent at wide receiver, but a consistent running game is needed to move the chains and run clock time. On defense, Presley was a bright spot in the spring with his high motor and speed.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Zips simply don't have enough skill players to be a disruptive force on either side of the ball. Bowden stressed his frustration over Akron's lack of size on both the offensive and defensive lines. The Zips left the spring with the quarterback spot wide open.

OFFENSE

New coach Terry Bowden installed a no-huddle attack to help generate some offense. The Zips, who won only two games in the last two years, averaged 14.2 points and 277.8 yards per game in 2011.

Akron's shortage of skill players at running back and wide receiver has been one of the key reasons for the program's derailment since winning the 2005 MAC championship.

Senior quarterback Dalton Williams is battling for the starting job after transferring from Stephen F. Austin. Williams' knowledge of the spread offense gives him the upper hand over returning starter Clayton Moore. Bowden failed to name a starter after spring practice.

The line underwent a complete reconstruction process, but it gains some depth with the return of Vinnie Rizzo and Mitch Straight from injuries.

Tailback Jawon Chisholm is coming off a solid freshman season. The Zips have a seasoned group of wide receivers in Marquelo Suel, A.J. Price and Keith Sconiers to help run the new offense. Suel and Sconiers combined for 81 receptions for 1,056 yards and nine touchdowns last season.

DEFENSE

Akron's defense — and team leadership — suffered a major blow when senior star middle linebacker Brian Wagner decided to transfer to Arizona. Wagner, the nation's top returning tackler, recorded 130-plus tackles in each of his three seasons at Akron.

Veteran coordinator Chuck Amato brings experience and a tough attitude to the defense, but Amato can't create miracles for a unit that lost its best player after allowing 38.5 points last season. In the spring, Amato stressed creating turnovers and putting pressure on the quarterback. The Zips registered just two interceptions and a paltry 11 sacks last year.

Defensive ends Nico Caponi and John Griggs are experienced, but the Zips have some youth at the tackle positions. Senior Troy Gilmer takes over Wagner's middle linebacker spot, flanked by sophomores Jamar Williams and Justin March.

The secondary is another area of concern, but cornerback Bill Alexander is coming off a good spring to team up with senior cornerback Emmanuel Lartey.

SPECIAL TEAMS

A.J. Fox made all eight of his field-goal attempts last year, but Bowden said the position was still open for competition after the spring. Freshman Zach Paul is a leading candidate to win the punting job, with Zack Campbell exhausting his eligibility.

The returning jobs must see improvement after the Zips averaged 17.6 yards per kickoff return and 4.3 yards per punt last year.

OVERVIEW

Bowden is not afraid of ruffling some feathers in pointing out Akron's lack of talent, size and speed. The spread offense will help put some much needed pressure on opposing teams. Bowden made a good impression on players with his personality and dedication to restoring the program. Bowden planned to add some junior college players or late transfers in the summer to help bolster the talent level.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Albert Presley: The junior college product displayed quality speed off the edge, with good inside moves, causing fits for Akron's offensive line in the spring. "He's got to be disciplined, but he does have the ability. That's what we're looking for," Amato said.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	13	Dalton Williams	6-4	230	Sr.
RB	**44**	**Jawon Chisholm***	**6-0**	**210**	**So.**
WR	**15**	**Marquelo Suel***	**6-3**	**195**	**Sr.**
WR	**3**	**A.J. Price***	**6-4**	**195**	**Sr.**
WR	**35**	**Keith Sconiers***	**6-1**	**185**	**Jr.**
TE	18	Will Fleming	6-4	240	Jr.
LT	76	Jarrod Pughsley	6-4	290	Jr.
LG	52	Vinnie Rizzo	6-3	285	Sr.
C	**65**	**Adam Bice***	**6-4**	**287**	**Sr.**
RG	67	Travis Switzer	6-3	277	So.
RT	64	Mitch Straight	6-5	300	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**90**	**John Griggs***	**6-5**	**273**	**Sr.**
DT	55	Dajour Morris	6-2	305	So.
DT	36	Cody Grice	6-0	256	Fr.
DE	**58**	**Nico Caponi***	**6-2**	**266**	**Jr.**
LB	50	Jamar Williams	5-11	215	So.
LB	**5**	**Troy Gilmer***	**6-1**	**223**	**Sr.**
LB	45	Justin March	6-0	215	So.
CB	21	Bill Alexander	5-9	170	Jr.
CB	**31**	**Emmanuel Lartey***	**5-11**	**181**	**Sr.**
SS	33	Josh Richmond	5-11	190	Sr.
FS	**26**	**Devonte Morgan***	**5-11**	**179**	**So.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**17**	**A.J. Fox***	**5-10**	**211**	**So.**
P	38	Zach Paul	6-3	185	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	UCF
Sept. 8	at FIU
Sept. 15	MORGAN STATE
Sept. 22	at Tennessee
Sept. 29	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 6	BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 13	at Ohio
Oct. 20	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 27	at Central Michigan
Nov. 3	at Kent State
Nov. 10	MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 20	at Toledo

2011 RESULTS

L	at Ohio State	0-42
L	TEMPLE	3-41
L	at Cincinnati	14-59
W	VMI	36-13
L	at Eastern Michigan	23-31
L	FIU	17-27
L	OHIO	20-37
L	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	22-23
L	at Miami (OH)	3-35
L	KENT STATE	3-35
L	at Buffalo	10-51
L	at Western Michigan	19-68

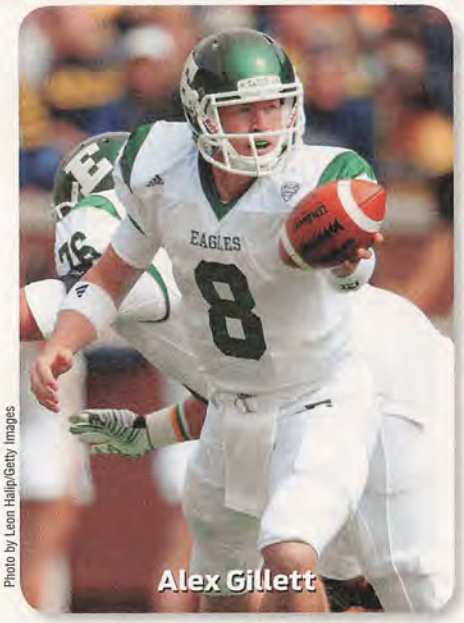
2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	14.2	118
Rushing	114.4	100
Passing	163.3	103
Total	277.8	115
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	38.5	116
Rushing	219.6	108
Pass	207.6	39
Total	427.2	94
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 9	- 0.75	108

RANKING

116 EASTERN MICHIGAN | EAGLES

MAC rank: 11 Record: 6-6 MAC record: 4-4 (T-4th, West) Stadium: Rynearson Stadium (30,200)



Alex Gillett

Photo by Leon Halip/Getty Images

"Alex has really matured as a senior. He just has to carry it over to the fall."
— Coach Ron English, on QB Alex Gillett

EAGLES at a GLANCE

COACH: Ron English — At EMU and overall: 8-28, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ken Karcher
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Snow

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1987
LAST BOWL: 1987, California Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 8 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Alex Gillett, TE Garrett Hoskins, C Andrew Sorgatz, LB Justin Cudworth, CB Marlon Pollard, CB Marcell Rose

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Eagles have a potent running game with most of last year's key rushers back and an intact offensive line. That's a good sign for a program looking to post a winning season for the first time since 1995. Gillett worked on developing a balance between the run and pass in the spring, emphasizing improvement with his footwork and accuracy.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: It's never a good thing when a three-year starting quarterback must battle for his starting position in the spring. Gillett's ability to become a two-dimensional quarterback by passing more is paramount to the offense's success. Inexperience at safety is a big concern, and the defensive line remains a work in progress.

OFFENSE

Senior quarterback Alex Gillett entered the spring with his job in jeopardy.

Eastern Michigan coach Ron English wanted to motivate Gillett by sending him a message that he needed to show marked improvement. Gillett, a three-year starter, worked on his footwork and accuracy and welcomed the new emphasis on passing the ball more this season.

Gillett, who led the Eagles in rushing with 736 yards last year, left the spring with his starting job intact after showing better chemistry with his wide receivers.

The Eagles, the 14th-best rushing attack in the nation in 2011, seek a balanced offense despite returning six of last year's top seven rushers. Javonti Greene, Dominique Sherrer and Ryan Brumfield get the opportunity to run behind an experienced line with all five starters back, plus senior tight end Garrett Hoskins.

Wide receivers Nick Olds and Demarius Reed welcome the opportunity for more balls thrown in their direction in the more-balanced offense. Look for incoming freshman receiver Quincy Jones to be an immediate factor in the passing game.

DEFENSE

The defense played a key role in EMU's improvement from winning two games in two years to recording six wins last year. The Eagles have to combat significant losses at key areas, especially along the defensive line and safety spots.

Defensive end Andy Mulumba had 7.5 tackles for loss in 2011, but he must adjust to an entire new group of linemen surrounding him.

The spring session showed EMU's weaknesses on defense with English commenting that "the defensive line is coming along, the linebackers are decent, and the safety position ... we have a long way to go."

That won't cut it in the offensive-oriented Mid-American Conference.

Linebackers Justin Cudworth and Blake Poole should get plenty of chances to rack up tackles. UCLA transfer Marlon Pollard and Marcell Rose are solid cornerbacks, but they will be hampered by the youth at the safety positions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore kick returner Tyler Allen captivated the coaching staff in the spring with his speed and change-of-direction while maintaining a downhill style of attack. Punter Jay Karutz averaged 38.8 yards per punt and didn't have one blocked last year. Kicker Kody Fulkerson struggled with accuracy past 30 yards last year.

OVERVIEW

The Eagles have to deal with the pressure of expectations for the first time since 1995. Optimism is high following EMU's 6-6 record last season and the return of a veteran offensive crew, although Eastern Michigan's six wins were somewhat deceiving, with two coming against FCS teams and their four league victories by only a combined 32 points.

The Eagles have to overcome a rugged schedule that features three of their first four games on the road, including at Purdue and Michigan State on consecutive weekends. The Eagles believe they can contend for the MAC West title, but the defensive front four and safety positions are flimsy.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Quincy Jones: The Eagles lack playmakers at receiver. Enter Jones. A three-star recruit, Jones (6-3, 195) has quality size and possesses sprinter's speed. Jones is a rare high-level offensive recruit to sign with the Eagles.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**8**	**Alex Gillett***	**6-1**	**218**	**Sr.**
RB	25	Dominique Sherrer	5-9	203	Sr.
WR	15	Julius Shelby	6-4	202	So.
WR	**80**	**Nick Olds***	**6-2**	**203**	**Jr.**
WR	2	Demarius Reed	5-10	167	So.
TE	**85**	**Garrett Hoskins***	**6-2**	**253**	**Sr.**
LT	**68**	**Korey Neal***	**6-3**	**316**	**Sr.**
LG	**70**	**Corey Watman***	**6-2**	**290**	**Sr.**
C	**72**	**Andrew Sorgatz***	**6-5**	**286**	**Sr.**
RG	**67**	**Campbell Allison***	**6-6**	**324**	**So.**
RT	**77**	**Lincoln Hansen***	**6-6**	**300**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	59	Matt Price	6-2	256	Jr.
NT	93	Cy Maughmer	6-2	299	So.
DT	94	Devin Henderson	6-2	319	Sr.
DE	**56**	**Andy Mulumba***	**6-4**	**262**	**Sr.**
LB	**47**	**Justin Cudworth***	**5-11**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	35	Colin Weingrad	6-0	213	Jr.
LB	21	Bryan Pali	6-0	209	Sr.
CB	**4**	**Marlon Pollard***	**6-0**	**173**	**Jr.**
CB	**31**	**Marcell Rose***	**5-9**	**185**	**Sr.**
SS	7	Sean Cotton	6-1	214	So.
FS	20	Kevin Johnson	5-11	193	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**34**	**Kody Fulkerson***	**5-11**	**185**	**Jr.**
P	**37**	**Jay Karutz***	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Ball State
Sept. 8	ILLINOIS STATE
Sept. 15	at Purdue
Sept. 22	at Michigan State
Oct. 6	KENT STATE
Oct. 13	TOLEDO
Oct. 20	ARMY
Oct. 27	at Bowling Green
Nov. 1	at Ohio
Nov. 10	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 17	at Western Michigan
Nov. 23	NORTHERN ILLINOIS

2011 RESULTS

W	HOWARD	41-9
W	ALABAMA STATE	14-7
L	at Michigan	3-31
L	at Penn State	6-34
W	AKRON	31-23
L	at Toledo	16-54
W	at Central Michigan	35-28
W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	14-10
L	BALL STATE	31-33
W	BUFFALO	30-17
L	at Kent State	22-28
L	at Northern Illinois	12-18

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.3	104
Rushing	218.3	14
Passing	126.7	117
Total	345.0	93
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.3	50
Rushing	140.5	49
Passing	209.8	41
Total	350.3	34
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-5	-0.42	91

RANKING

117 CENTRAL MICHIGAN | CHIPPEWAS

MAC rank: 12 Record: 3-9 MAC record: 2-6 (6th, West) Stadium: Kelly/Shorts Stadium (30,255)

Photo by Mark Zerof-US PRESSWIRE

"This can be the best team on the field I've had since I've been here."
— Coach Dan Enos

CHIPPEWAS at a GLANCE

COACH: Dan Enos — At Central Michigan and overall: 6-18, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Cummings
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Tumpkin

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2009
LAST BOWL: 2009, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 9 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ryan Radcliff, RB Zurlon Tipton, RB Anthony Garland, WR Titus Davis, LB Cody Lopez, DB Jahleel Addae, DB Avery Cunningham, K David Harman

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Radcliff is the established leader on offense and has more experienced personnel — especially at receiver — around him. The defense also should be stouter, returning its top three tacklers from last year, including Addae, an All-MAC defensive back.
PRIMARY PROBLEMS: Finding a playmaker at running back is likely the biggest concern. Neither Tipton nor Garland has the experience of being a top back; one or both must emerge quickly if the running game is to be a factor.

OFFENSE

Senior quarterback Ryan Radcliff anchors a unit that is a lot more experienced than last year, when a host of true freshmen had to make major contributions.

Radcliff returns for his final season, a year after leading the MAC with 2,491 passing yards in league games. He threw for 25 touchdowns on the season. The biggest issue with Radcliff will be limiting his mistakes; he was intercepted 16 times.

While Radcliff is the clear front-runner, Cody Kater, who transferred from Cincinnati, gives the Chippewas an immediate insurance policy.

Both of Radcliff's top receivers — sophomore Titus Davis (751 yards, eight touchdowns) and senior Cody Wilson — return, shoring up a corps that registered 3,290 receiving yards last year.

The biggest hole is at tight end, where Connor Odykirk, Caleb Southworth and Jarrett Fleming will compete to replace David Blackburn, the Chippewas' third-leading receiver (34 catches, 479 yards) last season.

The Chippewas must also establish a new feature back to replace two-time leading rusher Paris Cotton. Sophomore Anthony Garland, who ran for 378 yards and a touchdown as a freshman, along with Zurlon Tipton, could fill the playmaking ability left by Cotton's departure.

Tipton looked impressive with a 114-yard, two-touchdown effort in the spring game.

Austin White, who transferred from Michigan, was expected to contend for a starting job at running back. But four days after spring practice ended, coach Dan Enos announced White was one of three players released from the program.

DEFENSE

Senior first-team All-MAC defensive back Jahleel Addae led the Chippewas with 107 tackles last season, while also pacing the MAC with four interceptions. Backfield mate Avery Cunningham (79 tackles) also returns.

A more veteran presence — starting with linebacker Cody Lopez — should benefit a defense that allowed 33.3 points per game.

Lopez was third in tackles last year as a sophomore, but should help provide more stability on a defensive front that also returns a wealth of talent, headlined by senior defensive end Joe Kinville. He made 12 starts and had at least four tackles in each of seven games.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior David Harman was consistent last season, connecting on 13 of 16 field-goal attempts. Junior punter Richie Hogan also gained experience as a first-time starter when he forced opponents into 20 fair catches and placed 18 punts inside the 20-yard-line.

OVERALL

Last season's 3-9 finish was indicative of a team playing with 17 first-time starters. But even with the youth that defined Enos' team, the Chippewas had six games decided by seven points or less. Of Central Michigan's nine losses, five were by a combined 19 points.

Despite stiff Big Ten tests against Michigan State and Iowa, the Chippewas should be better, especially in tight games. They play seven home games and just need to be a little better to make a jump up the MAC West standings.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Cody Kater: The 6-3, 230-pound Kater started his career at Cincinnati, but spent last year at Grand Rapids (Mich.) Community College. He has the potential for the starting job, but, at the least, he gives the Chippewas a dependable backup and a go-to quarterback once Radcliff finishes his career.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	8	**Ryan Radcliff***	6-3	215	Sr.
RB	34	Zurlon Tipton	6-1	222	Jr.
WR	11	**Cody Wilson***	5-10	189	Sr.
WR	84	**Titus Davis***	6-2	185	So.
WR	81	**Jerry Harris***	6-3	185	Sr.
TE	89	Connor Odykirk	6-4	237	Jr.
LT	79	**Eric Fisher***	6-8	305	Sr.
LG	67	**Mike Repovz***	6-5	290	Sr.
C	66	**Andy Phillips***	6-3	302	So.
RG	65	**Darren Keyton***	6-3	300	Sr.
RT	60	**Kevin Henry***	6-5	300	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	93	**Joe Kinville***	6-4	260	Sr.
DT	55	**Steve Winston***	6-1	260	Sr.
NG	50	**Matt Losiniecki***	6-1	267	So.
DE	99	Caesar Rodriguez	6-2	241	Sr.
LB	51	Cody Lopez	6-1	218	So.
LB	22	Ryan Petro	6-0	218	So
LB	26	Shamari Benton	6-0	220	Jr.
CB	28	Dennis Nalor	6-0	178	So.
CB	2	**Lorenzo White***	6-0	180	Sr.
SS	4	**Jahleel Addae***	5-11	195	Sr.
FS	36	**Avery Cunningham***	6-0	201	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	96	**David Harman***	6-0	182	Sr.
P	13	**Richie Hogan***	6-2	203	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 8	MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 22	at Iowa
Sept. 29	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 6	at Toledo
Oct. 13	NAVY
Oct. 20	BALL STATE
Oct. 27	AKRON
Nov. 3	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 10	at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 17	MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 23	at Massachusetts

2011 RESULTS

W	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	21-6
L	at Kentucky	13-27
L	at Western Michigan	14-44
L	at Michigan State	7-45
W	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	48-41
L	at NC State	24-38
L	EASTERN MICHIGAN	28-35
L	at Ball State	27-31
W	at Akron	23-22
L	at Kent State	21-24
L	OHIO	28-43
L	TOLEDO	17-44

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.6	92
Rushing	115.8	98
Passing	274.2	25
Total	389.9	57
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.3	99
Rushing	187.0	93
Passing	241.8	80
Total	428.8	96
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-12	-1.00	114

RANKING

123 MASSACHUSETTS | MINUTEMEN

MAC rank: 13 Record: 5-6 CAA record: 3-5 (T-7th) Stadium: McGuirk Alumni Stadium (17,000)

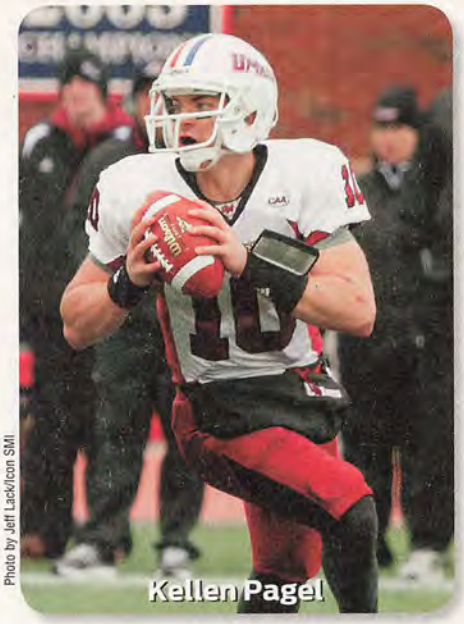

Kellen Pagel

Photo by Jeff Lack/Icon SMI

"I've been preparing for 28 years to be a head coach."
— Coach Charley Molnar

MINUTEMEN at a GLANCE

COACH: Charley Molnar: At UMass and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Kruczek
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Elmassian

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007, Colonial co-champions
LAST BOWL: (2007, FCS playoffs)
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 6 offense, 10 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kellen Pagel, TE Rob Blanchflower, WR Marken Michel, C Quinton Sales, LB Perry McIntyre, FS Darren Thellen

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offensive line is big, experienced and fairly deep. The tight end position could be the most productive of the skill positions, with Blanchflower and Brandon Howard. The defensive secondary is strong with safeties Christian Birt and Thellen. Molnar put together a veteran group of assistants.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The move up means a lot of FCS talent playing in FBS. UMass has a new coaching staff, new offensive system and few returning skill position players. There is a new defense and new coordinator for the third time in three years. The kicking game needs to take a huge step forward.

OFFENSE

Junior Kellen Pagel, who will start for the second straight year, is playing in his third offense for a third coordinator in as many years. And he'll be doing it in a new league as UMass moves up a division and starts in the MAC.

Despite all the changes, he has been doing pretty well.

Pagel completed 57.3 percent of his passes last year with nine touchdowns and nine interceptions. His success came despite suffering one confirmed concussion, and possibly another, that cost him three games.

Sophomore Brandon Hill and redshirt freshman Mike Wegzyn are his backups, but they are more suited for a pro-style attack.

UMass will run the spread offense and rely on a veteran line to hold everything together while the young players at the skill positions develop. Junior tight end Rob Blanchflower will be a key component of the offense. There might be a second option here after backup tight end Brandon Howard had an impressing spring.

The wide receivers return just four catches from last year. The running backs have a little more experience, with Jordan Broadnax and Alan Williams each carrying 35 times in 2011. Expect a running-back-by-committee approach until a true starter shakes out.

DEFENSE

The Minutemen's strength will be defense, which switches back to a 4-3 alignment after playing a 3-4 in 2011.

Massachusetts will be deep in the secondary, led by safeties Darren Thellen and Christian Birt, utilizing nickel packages to counter the many spread offenses it faces.

Perry McIntyre leads the linebacking corps that includes twins Tim and Tom Brandt, but the position has a big hole to fill after the graduation of FCS All-American Tyler Holmes.

The defensive line is strong in the middle with Charles Thompson and Kevin Byrne, but the pass rush is questionable. UMass returns 18 of its 23 sacks from last year, but most came from linebackers.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Brendon Levengood needs to become more reliable after missing five extra points, which ultimately cost him his starting job a year ago. He will get another chance, but his longest field goal was from only 38 yards. He attempted one field goal of 40-plus yards ... and missed it.

Punter Jeff Strait averaged 37.3 yards, but he had five boots of 50-plus, including a long of 61. Consistency is the key with him. Strait utilized the rugby-style as well as the traditional-style of punting last year.

OVERVIEW

Everyone except the Minutemen expect them to take their lumps this season as they transition to the Football Bowl Subdivision, especially with a challenging non-conference schedule. But this is a program that played at the highest level of the FCS and has been competitive with FBS teams despite less talent and fewer scholarships.

The defense will need to hold the line early, as the offense has too much inexperience at the skill positions to expect early success.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Michael Cox: The Michigan graduate, who transferred to his native state for his final year of eligibility, could add some much-needed FBS experience to the team's inexperienced skill position players.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	**Kellen Pagel***	6-3	212	Jr.
RB	20	Alan Williams	5-8	191	Sr.
WR	34	Derek Beck	6-4	205	Fr.
WR	19	Chase Danska	5-9	173	Sr.
WR	26	Marken Michel	5-10	185	So.
TE	87	**Rob Blanchflower***	6-4	250	Jr.
LT	72	**Nick Speller***	6-5	334	Sr.
LG	65	Malcolm Speller	6-4	300	Sr.
C	51	**Quinton Sales***	6-2	290	Sr.
RG	74	**Stephane Milhim***	6-5	315	Sr.
RT	66	**Anthony Dima***	6-7	302	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	55	**Ryan Delaire***	6-4	245	So.
DT	99	**Charles Thompson***	6-2	282	Sr.
NT	93	**Kevin Byrne***	6-3	290	Jr.
DE	95	**Brandon Potvin***	6-1	262	Jr.
LB	45	**Chad Hunte***	5-11	212	Sr.
LB	44	**Perry McIntyre***	6-1	240	Sr.
LB	47	**Tim Brandt***	6-0	212	Jr.
CB	17	Randall Jette	5-11	175	Fr.
CB	2	**Antoine Tharpe***	5-10	190	Jr.
SS	9	**Christian Birt***	6-2	197	Jr.
FS	27	**Darren Thellen***	6-2	207	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	96	**Brendon Levengood***	6-1	197	Jr.
P	41	**Jeff Strait***	6-0	197	Jr.

*Returning starter

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Connecticut
Sept. 8	INDIANA
Sept. 15	at Michigan
Sept. 22	at Miami (OH)
Sept. 29	OHIO
Oct. 6	at Western Michigan
Oct. 20	BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 27	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 3	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 10	at Akron
Nov. 17	BUFFALO
Nov. 23	CENTRAL MICHIGAN

2011 RESULTS

W	at Holy Cross	24-16
W	RHODE ISLAND	36-27
L	at Boston College	17-45
L	at Old Dominion	33-48
W	CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE	42-26
W	at Delaware	21-10
L	NEW HAMPSHIRE	21-27
W	at Richmond	28-7
L	VILLANOVA	17-35
L	at Maine	21-32
L	JAMES MADISON	17-34

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.2	62
Rushing	127.4	81
Passing	232.7	40
Total	360.1	58

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.9	74
Rushing	156.6	66
Passing	208.9	63
Total	365.5	64

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 5	- 0.45	84

(2001 statistics are from FCS)

FIU, Arkansas State Still Atop the Surging Sun Belt

Things are changing — and changing fast — in the Sun Belt Conference.

The league is adding a 10th football-playing member in 2012 with South Alabama coming aboard. The Jaguars will be serving their final year in transitioning to the FBS level and won't be eligible for the conference championship, but their games will count in the conference standings.

Even bigger changes are coming in 2013.

In just his first month on the job, new commissioner Karl Benson engineered the addition of Georgia State to the conference roster in 2013, bringing the league to 11 football-playing members, one short of the required number to begin divisional play and add a championship game.

But the ink was barely dry on that press release before North Texas and Florida International announced they were bolting for Conference USA.

In anticipating of that move, Benson announced that Texas State was joining the Sun Belt.

So, as the Bobcats from San Marcos come through the front door in July 2013, the Mean Green and Panthers will be going out the back.

The result of all this was that the Sun Belt could be back to 10 football-playing members in 2013, but further expansion also is very much in the works.

"At some point in time, and it will be sooner rather than later, we will address our next member," Benson said in announcing the addition of the Texas State. "Even though these things have moved fast, they've moved with a plan in place."

That plan still includes hopes of getting to a dozen football-playing members to allow the league to split into divisions, which would help ease scheduling difficulties in a conference that stretches from Florida Atlantic in South Florida to Texas.

Getting to 12 teams also could help fulfill Benson's goal of adding another bowl spot for the league. It presently has two, the New Orleans Bowl and the GoDaddy.com bowl in Mobile.

"As the next generation of bowls materializes beginning with the 2014 season," Benson said, "we expect to have at least three guaranteed bowl spots and perhaps even a fourth guaranteed.

"Assuming if we get to 12 teams, to have four guaranteed spots would be a realistic number."

The conference has had three teams in bowls in each of the past two years — and FIU, Arkansas State, Louisiana-Monroe, and Louisiana have legitimate postseason hopes in 2012. Troy and Western Kentucky, which was eligible with a 7-5 mark in 2011 but not picked, also could fit into that picture if breaks fall their way.

— Paul Borden

Sun Belt Conference Picks

	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. FIU	FIU has the best defense in the conference and one of the best running games.	WR T.Y. Hilton isn't around anymore to bail out the Panthers with big plays.	The Panthers look to win their second league title and go bowling for a third straight season.
2. Arkansas State	Quarterback Ryan Aplin is back, along with four of the top five receivers from 2011.	The pressure is on new coach Gus Malzahn to live up to his reputation.	If the Red Wolves can fill the holes on defense, they will contend for the crown again.
3. LA-Monroe	Offense is loaded with skill, headed by QB Kolton Browning, a two-year starter.	This is getting close to a "win-or-else" situation for coach Todd Berry.	The Warhawks could compete for a bowl spot if they have the answers on defense.
4. Louisiana	The offense will have punch with all-conference candidates at QB, RB and WR.	The defense might have problems stopping people unless answers are found quickly.	Getting FIU and Arkansas State at home could be the key to success for the Cajuns.
5. Troy	The Trojans have 10 starters back on offense, including QB Corey Robinson.	A porous 2011 defense didn't show much in the way of progress in the spring.	Troy should increase its win total (three in 2011) but not by enough to get back to top of the Sun Belt.
6. Western Kentucky	The Hilltoppers welcome back 15 starters on offense and defense, including their QB.	One of the losses was RB Bobby Rainey, who accounted for nearly half the offense.	The Hilltoppers will take a small step back after last year's surprising 7-5 run.
7. North Texas	A veteran line protects QB Derek Thompson, who has three of his top receivers returning.	Inexperience in the secondary makes Mean Green vulnerable to the spread attacks it will face.	With a break or two, North Texas could reach .500 level, but five wins is more realistic.
8. Middle Tenn.	QB Logan Kilgore returns to lead what was a very productive offense in 2011.	New coordinator Tyrone Nix is going to have to work wonders on the Blue Raiders defense.	The Raiders must come together defensively to have even an outside shot at breaking even.
9. Florida Atlantic	A new coach has brought a new offense, new defense and new attitude to the Owls.	Issues on both sides of the ball (especially at quarterback) still must be settled in fall camp.	The Owls have a couple of winnable games early, but they have a long, long way to go.
10. So. Alabama	Even without veteran LB Ken Barefield (dismissed), the defense looks to be competitive.	Depth problems are going to lead to struggles along the offensive line.	Jaguars have misfortune of joining the Sun Belt when the league is at its strongest.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-Sun Belt Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Ryan Aplin	Sr.	Arkansas State
RB	Kedrick Rhodes	Jr.	FIU
RB	Alonzo Harris	So.	Louisiana
WR	Brent Leonard	Sr.	Louisiana-Monroe
WR	Javone Lawson	Sr.	Louisiana
TE	Jack Doyle	Sr.	Western Kentucky
C	Josh Allen	Jr.	Louisiana-Monroe
OL	Leonardo Bates	Sr.	Louisiana
OL	Caylin Hauptmann	Sr.	FIU
OL	Adam Smith	Sr.	Western Kentucky
OL	Kyle Wilborn	Sr.	Troy
AP	Brelan Chancellor	Jr.	North Texas
K	Jack Griffin	Sr.	FIU

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Tourek Williams	Sr.	FIU
DL	Quanterus Smith	Sr.	Western Kentucky
DL	Isame Faciane	Jr.	FIU
DL	Omar McLendon	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
LB	Jordan Hunt	Sr.	FIU
LB	Andrew Jackson	Jr.	Western Kentucky
LB	Winston Fraser	Sr.	FIU
DB	Jemarlous Moten	Sr.	Louisiana
DB	Keith Reaser	Sr.	FAU
DB	Jajuan Harley	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
DB	Jonathan Cyprien	Sr.	FIU
P	Will Atterberry	Sr.	North Texas

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Blaine Gautier	Sr.	Louisiana
RB	Shawn Southward	Sr.	Troy
RB	Jyruss Edwards	Jr.	Louisiana-Monroe
WR	Josh Jarboe	Sr.	Arkansas State
WR	Eric Thomas	Jr.	Troy
WR	Taylor Stockemer	Sr.	Arkansas State
C	Trey Clark	Sr.	South Alabama
OL	Rupert Bryan	Sr.	FIU
OL	Jaron Odom	Jr.	Louisiana
OL	Jonathan Gill	Sr.	Louisiana-Monroe
OL	Cyril Lemon	So.	North Texas
AP	Darryl Surgent	Jr.	Louisiana
K	Brett Baer	Sr.	Louisiana

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Dexter Blackmon	Jr.	Arkansas State
DL	Jamarcus Allen	Sr.	Western Kentucky
DL	Gerrand Johnson	Fr.	Louisiana-Monroe
DL	Tony Davis	Sr.	Troy
LB	Randell Johnson	Jr.	FAU
LB	Zach Orr	Jr.	North Texas
LB	Kanorris Davis	Sr.	Troy
DB	Melvin White	Sr.	Louisiana
DB	Vincent Eddie	Jr.	Louisiana-Monroe
DB	Kareem Peterson	Sr.	Western Kentucky
DB	Brynden Trawick	Sr.	Troy
P	Brett Baer	Jr.	Louisiana

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 1	FIU at Duke
Sept. 1	Arkansas State at Oregon
Sept. 8	Louisiana at Troy
Sept. 15	Louisiana at Oklahoma State
Sept. 22	Louisville at FIU
Sept. 29	FIU at Louisiana
Sept. 29	Western Kentucky at Arkansas State
Oct. 4	Arkansas State at FIU
Oct. 6	Louisiana-Monroe at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 16	Louisiana at North Texas
Oct. 23	Arkansas State at Louisiana
Oct. 27	Western Kentucky at FIU
Nov. 3	Louisiana at Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 10	Louisiana at Florida
Nov. 24	Louisiana-Monroe at FIU

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Sun Belt #1/2
Sun Belt Champion
New Orleans Bowl vs.
Conference USA

Sun Belt #1/2
GoDaddy.com Bowl vs. MAC

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Tourek Williams	DE	Sr.	FIU	Relentless pass rusher with nice size (6-4, 255).
2. Jack Doyle	TE	Sr.	WKU	At 6-6, 251, has size combined with good hands.
3. Jonathan Cyprien	DB	Sr.	FIU	His play is drawing rave reviews from pro scouts.
4. Jordan Hunt	LB	Sr.	FIU	Covers lots of ground and delivers a hard hit.
5. Adam Smith	OL	Sr.	WKU	Rangy veteran who has made 34 career starts.
6. Caylin Hauptmann	OL	SR.	FIU	More discipline would pay big dividends.
7. Javone Lawson	WR	Sr.	Louisiana	Had a breakout year with 63 catches last year.
8. Jack Griffin	PK	Sr.	FIU	A clutch kicker with a strong, accurate leg.
9. Brynden Trawick	DB	Sr.	Troy	A tackling machine in the secondary.
10. Brent Baer	P/PK	Sr.	Louisiana	Solid performer in handling both kicking responsibilities.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Ryan Aplin, QB, Arkansas State	Blaine Gautier, QB, Louisiana	Tourek Williams, DE, FIU	Austin Moss, LB, LA-Monroe

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Blaine Gautier	Louisiana
Strongest Arm	Blaine Gautier	Louisiana
Best Scrambler	Ryan Aplin	Arkansas State
Coolest in Clutch	Ryan Aplin	Arkansas State
Toughest to Bring Down	Kedrick Rhodes	FIU
Best Hands	Brent Leonard	Louisiana-Monroe
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Javone Lawson	Louisiana
Best Pass Blocker	Adam Smith	Western Kentucky
Best Run Blocker	Cyril Lemon	North Texas
Best Pass Rusher	Quanterus Smith	Western Kentucky
Best Cover Corner	Keith Reaser	Florida Atlantic
Special Teams Demon	Brelan Chancellor	North Texas

RANKING

73 FLORIDA INT'L | GOLDEN PANTHERS

Sun Belt rank: 1 | Record: 8-5 | Sun Belt record: 5-3 (4th) | Stadium: FIU Stadium (18,000)

Kedrick Rhodes

Photo by Robert Mayer-US PRESSWIRE

"We're more flexible. We're more explosive. We're faster. We can change direction faster."
— Coach Mario Cristobal

GOLDEN PANTHERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mario Cristobal — At FIU and overall: 24-38, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Cramsey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Orlando

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: Beef O'Brady's Bowl, 2011
RETURNING STARTERS: 19; 7 offense, 10 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jake Medlock, RB Kedrick Rhodes, WR Wayne Times, DE Tourek Williams, DT Isame Faciane, LB Jordan Hunt, LB Winston Fraser, SS Jonathan Cyprien

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense has a chance to be dominating if it has corrected the propensity it had in 2011 to give up big plays late. The new up-tempo offense will put pressure on opposing defenses.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Medlock had a bit of an up-and-down spring and must stay healthy. With as little experience as he has (five games, two starts), those behind him are even greener.

OFFENSE

FIU will be without do-everything T.Y. Hilton, who not only was the team's leading receiver over the past four years, but a threat in the running game. What's more, the Panthers will be replacing Wesley Carroll, a two-year starter at quarterback.

But the potential is there for the Panthers to increase the 25 points and 360 yards a game they averaged while going 8-5 in 2011.

Senior wide receiver Wayne Times, who had 54 catches (second to Hilton's team-leading 72) as a junior, brings big-play potential to the passing game, and running back is in good hands with Kedrick Rhodes, who rushed for 1,149 yards as a sophomore.

The line is probably the most cohesive — and talented — group coach Mario Cristobal has had in his six years. Senior Giancarlo Revilla moves from center to guard, and senior Caylin Hauptmann is an all-conference candidate at left tackle. Tackle Rupert Bryan Jr. is a returning starter on the right side.

Carroll's likely replacement, sophomore Jake Medlock, could almost be counted as a returning starter. He had two starts late in 2011 before going down with a shoulder injury.

Medlock went through the spring at less than 100 percent, but the shoulder should be completely healed by fall camp. He is more of a running threat in the new up-tempo spread offense than Carroll was in the past two years.

DEFENSE

The Panthers made big strides on defense in 2011, especially against the run, but had problems giving up big plays late in games. That doesn't figure to be an issue in 2012.

Overall, FIU has gotten bigger, stronger and more athletic across the board on defense, especially up front.

Defensive end Tourek Williams, linebacker Winston Fraser and safety Jonathan Cyprien all return after earning second-team All-Sun Belt honors.

Tackles Isame Faciane and Andre Pound, linebacker Jordan Hunt and cornerback Jose Cheeseborough should challenge for all-conference recognition this fall, as well.

Cornerback Sam Miller, who had three sacks and two interceptions in eight starts as a sophomore, is a rising star in the secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Josh Brisk boosted his average by nearly three yards a kick to 42.3 in 2011. He had a dozen punts of more than 50 yards, and fewer than half (24) of his 61 kicks were returned.

Kicker Jack Griffin showed his clutch ability when he booted the game-winning field goal as time expired in the 2010 Little Caesars Pizza Bowl against Toledo. He made 22 of 26 field-goal attempts last season and has made all 81 of his PAT tries over two years.

OVERVIEW

Cristobal's approach since taking over a penalty- and scandal-ridden team in 2007 has been to build a program, not just a team, and that should pay off with FIU's best year yet. Coming off an 8-5 season, the Panthers will go into 2012 looking to get at least a piece of their second Sun Belt title in the past three years.

TOP NEWCOMER

E.J. Hilliard: The true freshman enrolled early and competed in the spring with redshirt freshman Loranzo Hammonds for the backup spot behind starter Jake Medlock. He comes out of Miami's Northwestern High and can run as well as throw, making him a nice fit for FIU's up-tempo spread offense.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	Jake Medlock	6-3	220	So.
RB	**9**	**Kedrick Rhodes***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
WR	**5**	**Wayne Times***	**5-11**	**188**	**Sr.**
WR	88	Jacob Younger	6-2	190	Sr.
WR	1	Willis Wright	6-1	196	Jr.
WR	**10**	**Glenn Coleman***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
LT	**71**	**Caylin Hauptmann***	**6-4**	**314**	**Sr.**
LG	**53**	**Giancarlo Revilla***	**6-2**	**280**	**Sr.**
C	**76**	**Shae Smith***	**6-3**	**280**	**Sr.**
RG	50	David Delsoin	6-6	298	Jr.
RT	**54**	**Rupert Bryan Jr.***	**6-2**	**270**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**97**	**Tourek Williams***	**6-4**	**255**	**Sr.**
DT	**75**	**Andre Pound***	**6-3**	**285**	**Sr.**
DT	**99**	**Isame Faciane***	**6-5**	**290**	**Jr.**
DE	55	Greg Hickman	6-1	274	Jr.
LB	**41**	**Kenny Dillard***	**6-0**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	**34**	**Winston Fraser***	**6-2**	**226**	**Sr.**
LB	**25**	**Jordan Hunt***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
CB	**27**	**Jose Cheeseborough***	**5-9**	**176**	**Jr.**
CB	**39**	**Sam Miller***	**5-9**	**180**	**Jr.**
S	**25**	**Jonathan Cyprien***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
S	**23**	**Terrance Taylor***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**38**	**Jack Griffin***	**6-1**	**203**	**Sr.**
P	**40**	**Josh Brisk***	**5-10**	**191**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Duke
Sept. 8	AKRON
Sept. 15	at UCF
Sept. 22	LOUISVILLE
Sept. 29	at Louisiana
Oct. 4	ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 13	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 20	at Troy
Oct. 27	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 3	at South Alabama
Nov. 16	at FAU
Nov. 24	ULM

2011 RESULTS

W	NORTH TEXAS	41-16
W	at Louisville	24-17
W	UCF	17-10
L	LOUISIANA	31-36
L	DUKE	27-31
W	at Akron	27-17
L	at Arkansas State	16-34
W	TROY (OT)	23-20
L	at Western Kentucky	9-10
W	FAU	41-7
W	at ULM	28-17
W	at Middle Tennesse	31-18
	Beef O'Brady's Bowl	
L	vs. Marshall	10-20

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.0	74
Rushing	145.6	72
Passing	214.9	70
Total	360.5	82

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.5	14
Rushing	118.1	22
Pass	226.6	65
Total	344.7	30

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 5	+ 0.38	30

RANKING

90

ARKANSAS STATE | RED WOLVES

Sun Belt rank: 2 Record: 10-3 Sun Belt record: 8-0 (1st) Stadium: ASU Stadium (30,708)

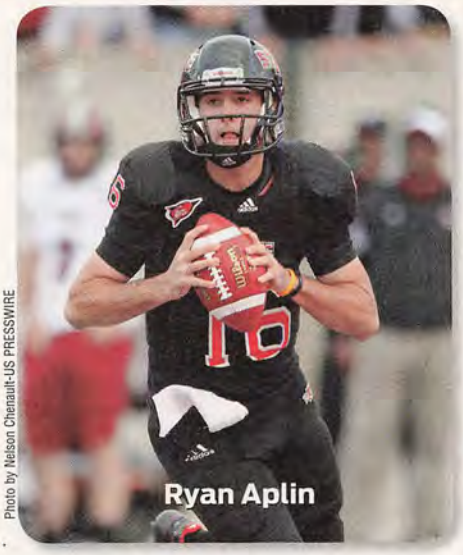


Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

"He is the real deal."
— An opposing coach, on ASU quarterback Ryan Aplin

RED WOLVES at a GLANCE

COACH: Gus Malzahn — At Arkansas State and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rhett Lashlee
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Thompson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ryan Aplin, WR Josh Jarboe, WR Taylor Stockemer, DT Ryan Carrethers, LB Nathan Herrold

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With Aplin, the Red Wolves have the top offensive threat in the conference, one who can run as well as throw. He also has some nice receiving targets. The kicking game is in good hands.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line is looking for three new starters, and there are numerous holes that need to be filled all over the defense. Several newcomers, including junior college transfers and freshmen, are going to have to step in right away.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Ryan Aplin, who led the Sun Belt's top offense last year, is back for his senior season.

Aplin will be missing his favorite receiver with the departure of Dwayne Frampton, who had a school single-season record 94 receptions in 2011. But Josh Jarboe, the Red Wolves' No. 2 pass catcher with 54 receptions, and Taylor Stockemer return, along with Allen Muse, who is looking to move onto the school's top 10 list in receiving in his third season.

Running back Derek Lawson (486 yards rushing) has departed, leaving a hole in the backfield, but the bigger issue on offense will be finding three new starters on the line, two on the left side, to protect Aplin. The Wolves added junior college offensive lineman DeShawn Byrd (6-6, 315) in the spring to help out.

There was a bit of mystery to the running game at the end of spring ball. Auburn transfer Michael Dyer played in the spring game, but had yet to be cleared to play this fall.

Dyer rushed for 2,335 yards in two seasons for the Tigers before running into legal issues. Dyer could apply for a hardship waiver because of the health of a family member.

Aplin was the team's leading rusher with 588 yards. Running back options are sophomore Frankie Jackson (355 yards) and junior Sirgregory Thornton.

DEFENSE

John Thompson, named coordinator at the end of February when Keith Patterson bolted for West Virginia six weeks after being hired, has only four returning starters.

They are junior tackle Ryan Carrethers, who started the last six games of 2011; senior linebacker Nathan Herrold, who was third on the team in tackles (66), and defensive backs Don Jones and Sterling Young. They combined for 120 tackles and two interceptions.

There are some players returning with experience, however, including sophomore linebacker Qushaun Lee (4.5 tackles for loss, two interceptions); senior corner Chaz Scales (three tackles for loss, one interception), and senior defensive end Tim Starson (one sack).

But Thompson likely will have to look at numerous newcomers for immediate help. They would include junior college transfer defensive tackle Dexter Blackmon and Chris Humes, a highly regarded defensive back prospect.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Arkansas State got a break when punter Neely Sullivent was granted a sixth year of eligibility. He shared the job with Ryan Wilbourn last year and averaged 39.3 yards on 22 attempts, with nine downed inside the opponent's 20-yard line.

Kicker Brian Davis was 18 of 23 on field-goal attempts, but did miss three PATs in 47 attempts.

OVERVIEW

The Red Wolves are going to need to duplicate their 2011 offensive performance while the defense rebuilds if they are to capture a second consecutive conference title. With Ryan Aplin at quarterback, they have a shot, especially if they can win an early conference test at FIU on Oct. 4.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Dexter Blackmon: Blackmon is a highly regarded junior college transfer who looks to fill a vital spot on defense at tackle. One of the top junior college line prospects in the country, he could contend for All-Sun Belt honors in his first year.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**16**	**Ryan Aplin***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
RB	6	Frankie Jackson	5-9	185	So.
WR	**3**	**Josh Jarboe***	**6-3**	**215**	**Sr.**
WR	**2**	**Taylor Stockemer***	**6-4**	**210**	**Sr.**
WR	17	Allen Muse	6-4	215	Sr.
TE	**85**	**Kedric Murry***	**6-3**	**265**	**Sr.**
LT	75	Chris Tolbert	6-5	275	Jr.
LG	69	Alan Wright	6-4	295	So.
C	55	Eric Allen	6-1	300	Sr.
RG	**63**	**Cliff Mitchell***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
RT	**74**	**Zack McKnight***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	54	Shervarius Jackson	6-2	230	Sr.
DT	N/A	Dexter Blackmon	6-4	283	Jr.
DT	**65**	**Ryan Carrethers***	**6-2**	**310**	**Jr.**
DE	91	Tim Starson	6-5	255	Sr.
LB	48	Qushaun Lee	5-11	225	So.
LB	**40**	**Nathan Herrold***	**6-3**	**235**	**Sr.**
DB	**5**	**Don Jones***	**6-1**	**208**	**Sr.**
CB	25	Chaz Scales	5-9	170	Sr.
CB	N/A	Chris Humes	5-11	190	Fr.
FS	**38**	**Sterling Young***	**6-2**	**182**	**So.**
SS	8	Tausean Holmes	5-10	190	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**2**	**Brian Davis***	**5-11**	**160**	**Jr.**
P	**15**	**Neely Sullivent***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Oregon
Sept. 8	MEMPHIS
Sept. 15	at Nebraska
Sept. 22	ALCORN STATE
Sept. 29	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 4	at FIU
Oct. 13	SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 23	at Louisiana
Nov. 3	at North Texas
Nov. 8	ULM
Nov. 17	at Troy
Dec 1	MIDDLE TENNESSEE

2011 RESULTS

L	at Illinois	15-33
W	MEMPHIS	47-3
L	at Virginia Tech	7-26
W	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	53-24
W	at Western Kentucky	26-22
W	at ULM	24-19
W	FIU	34-16
W	NORTH TEXAS	37-14
W	at FAU	39-21
W	LOUISIANA	30-21
W	at Middle Tennesse	45-19
W	TROY	45-14
	GoDaddy.com Bowl	
L	vs. Northern Illinois	20-38

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.5	31
Rushing	154.2	64
Passing	293.6	16
Total	447.9	24
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.8	25
Rushing	103.5	13
Pass	227.9	69
Total	331.5	24
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	44

RANKING

94 LOUISIANA-MONROE | WARHAWKS

Sun Belt rank: 3 Record: 4-8 Sun Belt record: 3-5 (6th) Stadium: Malone Stadium (30,427)

Kolton Browning

Photo by Steve Mitchell-US PRESSWIRE

"We're certainly a deeper football team than we have been over the past two years." — Coach Todd Berry

WARHAWKS at a GLANCE

COACH: Todd Berry — At ULM: 9-15, 2 years; **OVERALL:** 38-75, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Farmer
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Troy Reffett

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 9 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kolton Browning, RB Jyruss Edwards, RB Centarius Donald, WR Brent Leonard, WR Tavarese Maye, DE Kentarius Caldwell, NT Gerrand Johnson, LB Austin Moss

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Warhawks have talent and depth at the skill positions, particularly at receiver, and should be able to put points on the board if everyone stays healthy. The offensive line is young but experienced and has some depth.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Warhawks have only one returning starter (Kentarius Caldwell) up front on defense, and he's moving back to end from the nose tackle spot he played in 2011. The secondary has good speed, but lacks experience.

OFFENSE

With a large contingent of experienced players at the skill positions, plus some veteran linemen returning, ULM has few issues on offense.

The experience starts at quarterback, where two-year starter Kolton Browning returns after throwing for nearly 207 yards per game and averaging another 37 on the ground last season.

His top four targets — receivers Brent Leonard, Tavarese Maye and Colby Harper, and running back Jyruss Edwards — are back. So too is Je'Ron Hamm, who emerged from the spring as a starter when the Warhawks go to a four-receiver set. Leonard had 69 catches, Maye 50 in 2011.

Edwards is a returning starter who rushed for 667 yards last season. He will be joined by Centarius Donald, who rushed for 414 yards in seven games before going out with a lower body injury.

In addition to the return of three starters (Joseph Treadwell, Ben Risenhoover and Jonathan Gill) on the line, ULM will have Josh Allen back at center. He played guard in 2011 but started eight games at center as a freshman in 2010.

A healthy Keavon Milton could make a big difference in the running game as a big blocking tight end.

DEFENSE

The Warhawks are deeper at linebacker than in recent years, so deep that senior R.J. Young, a returning starter slowed by injuries, found himself No. 2 on the depth chart behind newcomer Austin Moss coming out of the spring.

Senior linebacker Cameron Blakes is a returning starter, but DaCorris Ford was one of the surprises of the spring. Ford, a little-used backup over his career, came out ahead of expected starter Ray Stovall going into the fall.

The concerns are on the line and in the secondary.

Junior Kentarius Caldwell is the only returning starter in the three-man front, and he is moving from nose tackle back to end, where he played as a freshman. That move was made possible when Gerrand Johnson, a redshirt freshman, had a big spring.

The big losses are in the secondary. Darius Prelow, who had 77 tackles and four interceptions playing the "Hawk" position, a hybrid safety-linebacker, is gone along with two other starters.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicking was a big problem in 2011 and remains an area of concern.

Sophomore Justin Manton made just 6 of 14 field-goal attempts and was 2 of 10 from beyond 40 yards. He also had two kicks blocked.

Sophomore Conner Fryoux and redshirt freshman Caleb Gammel will compete for the punting job that became vacant when Aaron Munoz transferred after two years on the job. Fryoux averaged 37.8 yards on 11 punts last year.

OVERVIEW

The Warhawks are hoping their potential explosiveness on offense will make up for their disappointing run in the conference in 2011, when some saw them as contenders. If they find the answers on defense, they may live up to that promise in 2012.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Austin Moss: Big things are expected of Moss, who spent last year at Navarro Junior College in Texas after beginning his collegiate career at Arkansas. He played in 11 games for the Razorbacks as a freshman in 2009. He immediately won a starting position for ULM in the spring.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**15**	**Kolton Browning***	**6-1**	**198**	**Jr.**
RB	**7**	**Jyruss Edwards***	**5-11**	**196**	**Jr.**
WR	**18**	**Brent Leonard***	**6-2**	**185**	**Sr.**
WR	**13**	**Colby Harper***	**6-0**	**180**	**So.**
WR	**8**	**Tavarese Maye***	**6-0**	**173**	**Jr.**
TE	**80**	**Keavon Milton***	**6-4**	**288**	**Sr.**
LT	**65**	**Joseph Treadwell***	**6-5**	**305**	**So.**
LG	**77**	**Ben Risenhoover***	**6-2**	**283**	**So.**
C	66	Josh Allen	6-3	299	Jr.
RG	**56**	**Jonathan Gill***	**6-3**	**277**	**Sr.**
RT	75	Demiere Burkett	6-2	295	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	**91**	**Kentarius Caldwell***	**6-2**	**266**	**Jr.**
NT	76	Gerrand Johnson	6-0	267	Fr.
DE	99	Joey Gautney	6-1	248	So.
LB	45	DaCorris Ford	6-1	226	Sr.
LB	44	Austin Moss	6-2	226	Jr.
LB	**35**	**Cameron Blakes***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
CB	9	Otis Peterson	5-11	163	Jr.
CB	**27**	**Vincent Eddie***	**5-8**	**157**	**Jr.**
S	**25**	**Isaiah Newsome***	**5-11**	**198**	**Jr.**
S	10	Cordero Smith	5-11	189	So.
S	31	Henry Mitchell	5-11	192	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**17**	**Justin Manton***	**6-2**	**186**	**So.**
P	24	Conner Fryoux	5-8	182	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 8	at Arkansas
Sept. 15	at Auburn
Sept. 22	BAYLOR
Sept. 29	at Tulane
Oct. 6	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 13	FAU
Oct. 20	at Western Kentucky
Oct. 27	SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 3	LOUISIANA
Nov. 8	at Arkansas State
Nov. 17	NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 24	at FIU

2011 RESULTS

L	at Florida State	0-34
W	GRAMBLING	35-7
L	at TCU	17-38
L	at Iowa	17-45
L	ARKANSAS STATE	19-24
W	at Troy	38-10
L	at North Texas	21-38
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY (OT)	28-31
L	at Louisiana	35-36
W	MIDDLE TENNESSE	42-14
L	FIU	17-28
W	at FAU	26-0

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.6	78
Rushing	153.0	65
Passing	237.6	58
Total	390.6	55
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.4	59
Rushing	100.0	8
Pass	226.2	63
Total	326.2	21
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.25	38

RANKING

96 LOUISIANA | RAGIN' CAJUNS

Sun Belt rank: 4 | Record: 9-4 | Sun Belt record: 6-2 (3rd) | Stadium: Cajun Field (31,000)

Photo by Derick E. Hingle-US PRESSWIRE

"We have the ability to put a lot of points on the board this fall if we take care of the ball."
— Coach Mark Hudspeth

RAGIN' CAJUNS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mark Hudspeth — At Louisiana: 9-4, 1 year; **OVERALL:** 75-25, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Stewart

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Big West
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 9 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Blaine Gautier, RB Alonzo Harris, WR Javone Lawson, WR Harry Peoples, RT Jaron Odom, ROV Le'Marcus Gibson, S Jemarlous Moten, P/PK Brett Baer

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Cajuns have depth at quarterback, with Houston transfer Terrance Broadway backing up returning starter Gautier, and have an experienced and deep receiving corps, as well. The offensive line returns four starters.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Seven new starters must be found on defense, and though some of the candidates gained exposure last year, they still must prove themselves as front-line players. No starters return up front, and the secondary has holes to fill at both safety spots.

OFFENSE

With nine offensive starters back, including quarterback Blaine Gautier and the league's second-most productive receiver in Javone Lawson, Louisiana should have no trouble moving the football.

Gautier was the Sun Belt's most efficient passer in 2011, throwing for 23 touchdowns with only six interceptions. His favorite target was Lawson, who was one of three players in the conference with more than 1,000 yards in receptions. He had 1,092 yards on 63 catches.

Two other receivers, Harry Peoples and Darryl Surgent, are back as well. Peoples ranked sixth in the conference in receptions per game and seventh in yardage.

Alonzo Harris, who earned conference Newcomer of the Year honors after rushing for 700 yards as a freshman, will lead the ground attack.

The Cajuns welcome back four starters on the line, including Jaron Odom at tackle and Daniel Quave at guard, but they lose their stud tight end of the past four years, Ladarius Green. That's a position that won't be filled until late in fall camp.

DEFENSE

As much as the offense is filled with returning starters and big-play guys, the situation on the other side of the ball is just the opposite.

The Cajuns welcome back only four starters and must find replacements for, among others: end Bernard Smith, who was one of the league leaders in sacks (6.5) and tackles for loss (13); linebacker Lance Kelley, their leading tackler; and rover Devon Lewis-Buchanan, who also was in double figures in tackles for loss (10.5).

Jemarlous Moten, who tied Kelley and Dwight Bentley for the team lead in interceptions with three, and Melvin White (two picks) return at the corners, but the Cajuns will be looking for new safeties.

The other returning starters are rover Le'Marcus Gibson and linebacker Jake Molbert.

Despite the personnel losses, at least nine other players return on defense after having gained some experience in 2011, including linebacker Justin Anderson, who started in the New Orleans Bowl win over San Diego State.

Coaches also are hopeful that linebacker Delvin Jones, a junior college transfer, has his academics in order and will be eligible.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Brett Baer does double-duty for the Cajuns — actually triple, counting kickoffs — in handling placekicking and punting chores. He was 18 of 20 on field-goal attempts last season, including the game-decider from 50 yards as time ran out in the bowl victory.

Baer also averaged just more than 40 yards on 79 punts, downing 27 inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Opponents averaged less than five yards per return against him.

OVERVIEW

The Cajuns were a surprising contender for the conference title in 2011, but it won't be a shock if they challenge again. They have the offensive firepower and a rising star in the coaching business in Mark Hudspeth. The key will be building a defense that can come up with enough stops.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Jalen Fields: Fields originally signed with Georgia and seemed destined to be a Bulldog after shoring up his academic credentials at Georgia Military Academy in the past two years. At 6-5, 280, Fields is expected to have an immediate impact on the Cajuns' defense.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**17**	**Blaine Gautier***	**6-0**	**212**	**Sr.**
RB	**46**	**Alonzo Harris***	**6-1**	**205**	**So.**
WR	**87**	**Darryl Surgent***	**6-0**	**195**	**Jr.**
WR	**4**	**Javone Lawson***	**6-1**	**183**	**Sr.**
WR	**9**	**Harry Peoples***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
TE	85	Ian Thompson	6-4	234	Jr.
LT	**72**	**Leonardo Bates***	**6-5**	**296**	**Sr.**
LG	70	Mykhael Quave	6-5	300	Fr.
C	**71**	**Andre Huval***	**6-2**	**305**	**Jr.**
RG	**67**	**Daniel Quave***	**6-3**	**324**	**So.**
RT	**76**	**Jaron Odom***	**6-7**	**330**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	45	Emeka Onyenekwu	6-4	250	Sr.
NT	94	Justin Hamilton	6-3	330	So.
DT	93	Cordian Hagans	6-5	310	Sr.
LB	**59**	**Jake Molbert***	**6-1**	**220**	**So.**
LB	34	Justin Anderson	6-3	240	Jr.
BAN	52	Dominique Tovell	6-3	240	Fr.
CB	**22**	**Melvin White***	**6-3**	**191**	**Sr.**
CB	**2**	**Jemarlous Moten***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**
ROV	**30**	**Le'Marcus Gibson***	**6-0**	**205**	**Sr.**
SS	11	Darius Barksdale	6-0	190	Jr.
FS	19	Rodney Gillis	5-11	186	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**40**	**Brett Baer***	**5-11**	**182**	**Sr.**
P	**40**	**Brett Baer***	**5-11**	**182**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	LAMAR
Sept. 8	at Troy
Sept. 15	at Oklahoma State
Sept. 29	FIU
Oct. 6	TULANE
Oct. 16	at North Texas
Oct. 23	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 3	at ULM
Nov. 10	at Florida
Nov. 17	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 24	SOUTH ALABAMA
Dec. 1	at FAU

2011 RESULTS

L	at Oklahoma State	34-61
W	at Kent State	20-12
W	NICHOLLS STATE	38-21
W	at FIU	36-31
W	FAU	37-34
W	TROY	31-17
W	NORTH TEXAS	30-10
L	at Western Kentucky	23-42
W	at Middle Tennesse	45-20
W	ULM	36-35
L	at Arkansas State	21-30
L	at Arizona	37-45
	New Orleans Bowl	
W	vs. San Diego State	32-30

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.3	32
Rushing	125.2	88
Passing	269.5	29
Total	394.6	51
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	29.9	84
Rushing	138.6	46
Pass	261.3	100
Total	399.9	75
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.0	59

RANKING

98 TROY | TROJANS

Sun Belt rank: 5 Record: 3-9 Sun Belt record: 2-6 (7th) Stadium: Veterans Memorial Stadium (30,000)

Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

Corey Robinson

"He's really worked hard on protecting the ball this spring. I expect that to carry over to the fall." — Larry Blakeney on QB Corey Robinson

TROJANS at a GLANCE

COACH: Larry Blakeney — At Troy and overall: 164-91-1, 22 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kenny Edenfield
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeremy Rowell

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: 2010, New Orleans
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 5 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Corey Robinson, RB Shawn Southward, WR Eric Thomas, OL Kyle Wilborn, DE Tony Davis, LB Brannon Bryan, LB Kanorris Davis, S Brynden Trawick

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Robinson is one of the top quarterbacks in the Sun Belt. Southward and D.J. Taylor are a potent one-two punch at tailback. The Trojans return nine of their top 10 pass-catchers, including Thomas, a great route runner. Tony Davis is a quality pass-rusher. Bryan, Kanorris Davis and Trawick are leaders and all-conference-type players.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Troy must find replacements for All-Sun Belt tackle James Brown and center Zach Swindall. The running game is still an area of concern. The Trojans must replace three starters up front on defense, including pass-rush extraordinaire Jonathan Massaquoi. Depth at the cornerback position is thin. The kicking game is unproven.

OFFENSE

Corey Robinson begins his third season as the starting quarterback after completing 62.2 percent of his passes for 3,411 yards and 21 touchdowns a year ago.

The junior is well-versed in Troy's spread offense, but he needs to cut down on his 2011 interception total (15) to take his game to a higher level. Robinson worked hard on taking care of the football this spring.

Although the ground game, or lack thereof (Troy averaged just 88.7 ypg rushing), hurt the Trojans last year, don't be surprised to see that area improve significantly. Coach Larry Blakeney stressed being physical in the run game during the spring.

Seniors Shawn Southward, D.J. Taylor and Chris Anderson will spearhead Troy's ground attack, which will have some new wrinkles to it.

The receiver position is loaded with talent and experience, but Eric Thomas figures to be Robinson's top target. The 6-1 junior, who led the team in receptions (67) and yards (875) a year ago, is an all-conference player in the making.

Up front, guards Kyle Wilborn and Zach Johnson return, as does right tackle Terrence Jones.

DEFENSE

The Trojans will shift to a 3-4 look this season in an effort to get more speed on the field.

Tony Davis will be a starter at one end spot, but the battle for the starting tackle positions are still up for grabs.

Shermane TeArt and D.J. Johnson head into the fall as the top two candidates to man one tackle spot, while Kyle Lucas and John Clark are in a battle for the other tackle position. Junior college signee Xavier Melton (6-4, 305) will also be in the mix.

Jacoby Thomas, Kanorris Davis, Brannon Bryan and Dimitri Miles should combine to give the Trojans an athletic linebacking corps. Thomas is being counted on to man the new "Bandit" position in Troy's scheme, which should take advantage of his speed and quickness. Although he sat out the spring, Davis will be the team's nickel back. Bryan and Miles will be the two inside linebackers.

Brynden Trawick led the team in tackles (123) a season ago and is one of the Trojans' top playmakers on defense. He and Barry Valcin will man the two safety spots, while Bryan Willis and either Shaq Beverly or Ethan Davis will be the other starting corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Will Scott and Jed Solomon are in a battle to replace Michael Taylor at placekicker. Scott is also competing for the punter and kickoff specialist jobs.

Justin Albert will be the punt returner. Chandler Worthy and Bryan Holmes will handle kickoff returns.

OVERVIEW

Despite suffering through the worst year for a Troy team since 1982, Blakeney's crew should bounce back in a big way. Troy returns a wealth of experienced players on both sides of the ball, and the schedule isn't as daunting as it was a year ago.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Xavier Melton: Melton's size (6-4, 305) and strength should be a welcome addition to a Troy defense that needs bulk up front in order to keep opposing offensive linemen off the team's speedy, athletic linebackers.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**6**	**Corey Robinson***	**6-2**	**209**	**Jr.**
RB	**20**	**Shawn Southward***	**5-9**	**192**	**Sr.**
WR	**3**	**Eric Thomas***	**6-1**	**209**	**Jr.**
WR	89	Chandler Worthy	5-9	159	So.
WR	83	Jaquon Robinson	5-11	188	Sr.
WR	1	Jamel Johnson	6-2	217	Jr.
LT	66	Jarred Fleming	6-5	281	Sr.
LG	**77**	**Kyle Wilborn***	**6-4**	**299**	**Sr.**
C	55	Andrew Phillips	6-3	328	Sr.
RG	**58**	**Zach Johnson***	**6-3**	**320**	**So.**
RT	**75**	**Terrence Jones***	**6-3**	**306**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**49**	**Tony Davis***	**6-0**	**249**	**Sr.**
DT	**91**	**Shermane TeArt***	**6-0**	**279**	**Jr.**
DT	93	Kyle Lucas	6-3	274	Sr.
BAN	56	Jacoby Thomas	5-11	248	Sr.
LB	9	Dimitri Miles	6-1	209	So.
LB	**42**	**Brannon Bryan***	**6-0**	**227**	**Sr.**
NB	44	Kanorris Davis	5-10	203	Sr.
CB	21	Shaq Beverly	5-8	200	Fr.
CB	**26**	**Bryan Willis***	**5-10**	**184**	**Sr.**
S	2	Barry Valcin	5-10	197	Sr.
S	**10**	**Brynden Trawick***	**6-2**	**221**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	4	Jed Solomon	5-7	152	Fr.
P	21	Will Scott	5-11	192	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at UAB
Sept. 8	LOUISIANA
Sept. 15	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 22	at North Texas
Sept. 29	at South Alabama
Oct. 11	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 20	FIU
Oct. 27	at FAU
Nov. 3	at Tennessee
Nov. 10	NAVY
Nov. 17	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 24	at Middle Tennessee

2011 RESULTS

L	at Clemson	19-43
L	at Arkansas	28-38
W	MIDDLE TENNESSE	38-35
W	UAB	24-23
L	at Louisiana	17-31
L	ULM	10-38
L	at FIU (OT)	20-23
L	at Navy	14-42
L	NORTH TEXAS	33-38
W	FAU	34-7
L	at Western Kentucky	18-41
L	at Arkansas State	14-45

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.4	94
Rushing	88.7	117
Passing	291.3	17
Total	380.0	65
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.7	101
Rushing	203.6	105
Pass	261.4	101
Total	465.0	113
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-12	-1.00	114

RANKING

99

WESTERN KENTUCKY | HILLTOPPERS

Sun Belt rank: 6 Record: 7-5 Sun Belt: 7-1 (2nd) Stadium: Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium (22,113)

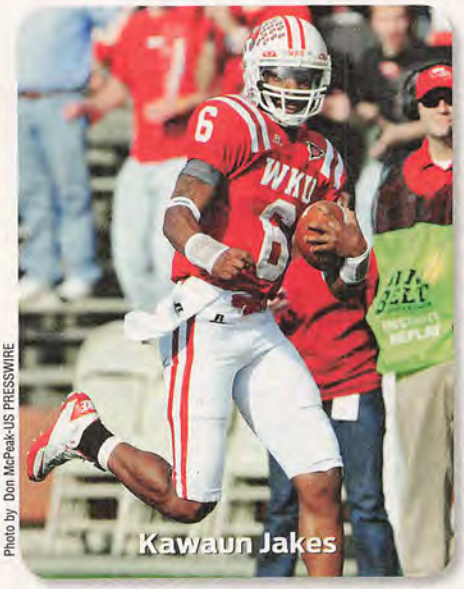


Photo by Don McPeak-US PRESSWIRE

"What's our name?!" — Coach Willie Taggart, mocking the various ways Western Kentucky gets abbreviated on TV.

HILLTOPPERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Willie Taggart — At Western Kentucky and overall: 9-15, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Willie Taggart
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lance Guidry

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2002, Gateway Football Conference co-champs
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kawaun Jakes, RB Keshawn Simpson, TE Jack Doyle, LB Andrew Jackson, DB Jamal Forrest, DB Jonathan Dowling, DL Jamarcus Allen

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The team's defense has plenty of potential with both a deep and talented linebacking corps and secondary. Not too many teams can also say they have a group of four tight ends that contributes regularly to the team's aerial assault.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Hilltoppers have three potential playmakers to replace record-setting RB Bobby Rainey. But if those three — Simpson, Antonio Andrews or John Evans — can't perform, WKU will be in trouble. Western Kentucky is a run-oriented offense that relies on play-action and time of possession. Forcing QB Jakes — who doesn't have a strong statistical history — to carry the offense is a risky proposition.

OFFENSE

It's the biggest question for Western Kentucky's offense — what will WKU do without record-setting running back Bobby Rainey?

Rainey set school records for rushing yards in a career and a single season in 2011 — but he's headed toward professional ball. The Hilltoppers look to run and run a lot in third-year coach Willie Taggart's West Coast offense, and how to replace Rainey (1,695 yards rushing, 361 receiving, 48 passing, 17 total TDs) is the overwhelming concern.

But what the Tops lack without Rainey, they make up for elsewhere. Senior quarterback Kawaun Jakes is entering his third year as a starter. Senior tight end Jack Doyle will be a John Mackey Award candidate. Four starting linemen are back.

The wide receiving corps is a concern with its youth and inexperience, but speedy Willie McNeal has made a full recovery from a 2011 knee injury and has emerged as the go-to guy. Rico Brown, Boe Brand and Tyler Higbee improved this spring and are expected to contribute.

As for running back, Keshawn Simpson, Antonio Andrews and John Evans made up a three-headed monster in the spring. If one emerges in the fall, as Taggart said he would like to happen, WKU should be fine on offense.

DEFENSE

Led by vicious-hitting middle linebacker Andrew Jackson and a talented secondary, WKU wants a unit that returns seven starters to dominate. The Tops ranked fourth in the Sun Belt in total defense in 2011. They enter their second season under defensive coordinator Lance Guidry.

The Hilltoppers have to replace productive ends Jared Clendenin and Bo Adebayo. Jamarcus Allen and Kenny Martin are back to clog up the inside, and WKU is looking at senior Cole Tischer and sophomore T.J. Smith — who moved from linebacker — to fill in at end.

Jackson led the team with 109 tackles in 2011 and said this spring he focused on becoming the quarterback of the defense. Starter Xavius Boyd will join him on the weak side, while Tye Golden and Bar'ee Boyd fight for the strongside spot. Kareem Peterson, Tyree Robinson and Florida transfer Jonathan Dowling lead a deep and talented secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Hendrix Brakefield, one of the top punters in the Sun Belt, also took turns at placekicker and tried his leg at kickoffs this spring, all while working on his hang time to get NFL-type numbers, according to coaches. Brakefield averaged 41.6 yards on 64 punts last season.

Jesse Roy was 2 of 6 on field-goal attempts and 17 of 20 on PATs in 2011. The sophomore will have to be better to stop what has been a revolving door at the position.

OVERVIEW

Taggart's Tops have laid the foundation — now they're looking to take the next step and introduce themselves to the nation. With renewed enthusiasm and fresh off a bowl-snubbed 7-5 season, WKU has ambitions of winning the Sun Belt Conference and making its first ever postseason bowl game as members of the FBS.

TOP NEWCOMER

DB Jonathan Dowling: Although he sat out in 2011 after transferring from Florida, Dowling turned heads all spring. "He's an exciting football player and the type of kid we need here in this program in order to continue to do what we're doing," said coach Willie Taggart.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	6	**Kawaun Jakes***	6-3	198	Sr.
RB	34	Keshawn Simpson	6-0	240	Jr.
FB	32	**Kadeem Jones***	5-11	269	Jr.
TE	82	**Jack Doyle***	6-6	251	Sr.
WR	10	Willie McNeal	5-10	164	So.
WR	18	**Boe Brand***	6-0	158	So.
LT	60	Ed Hazelett	6-8	324	Jr.
LG	63	**Luis Polanco***	6-2	292	Jr.
C	65	**Sean Conway***	6-3	306	Jr.
RG	76	**Adam Smith***	6-5	322	Sr.
RT	75	**Seth White***	6-5	284	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	93	Quanterus Smith	6-5	251	Sr.
DT	43	**Jamarcus Allen***	5-11	290	Sr.
DT	95	**Kenny Martin***	6-0	281	Sr.
DE	45	Cole Tischer	6-4	254	Sr.
LB	12	Tye Golden	6-2	237	Sr.
LB	4	**Andrew Jackson***	6-1	262	Jr.
LB	13	**Xavius Boyd***	6-2	233	Jr.
CB	22	**Tyree Robinson***	5-10	198	Jr.
CB	8	Jamal Forrest	5-9	166	Jr.
SS	29	**Kiante Young***	5-11	224	Sr.
FS	14	**Kareem Peterson***	5-11	180	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	56	Jesse Roy	6-0	186	So.
P	99	**Hendrix Brakefield***	6-4	244	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 8	at Alabama
Sept. 15	at Kentucky
Sept. 22	SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 29	at Arkansas State
Oct. 11	at Troy
Oct. 20	ULM
Oct. 27	at FIU
Nov. 1	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 10	FAU
Nov. 17	at Louisiana
Nov. 24	NORTH TEXAS

2011 RESULTS

L	KENTUCKY	3-14
L	NAVY	14-40
L	INDIANA STATE	16-44
L	ARKANSAS STATE	22-26
W	at Middle Tennesse	36-33
W	at FAU	20-0
W	LOUISIANA	42-23
W	at ULM	31-28
W	FIU	10-9
L	at LSU	9-42
W	at North Texas	31-21
W	TROY	41-18

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.9	89
Rushing	181.6	35
Passing	167.3	102
Total	348.9	89
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.8	55
Rushing	134.8	44
Pass	238.9	77
Total	373.8	53
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-3	-0.25	82

RANKING

101 NORTH TEXAS | MEAN GREEN

Sun Belt rank: 7 Record: 5-7 Sun Belt record: 4-4 (5th) Stadium: Apogee Stadium (30,850)

Photo by Samuel Lewis/Icon SMI

Derek Thompson

"I feel good and I feel comfortable. I feel comfortable with the guys I have."

— Offensive coordinator Mike Canales

MEAN GREEN at a GLANCE

COACH: Dan McCarney — At North Texas: 5-7, 1 year
OVERALL: 61-92, 13 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Canales
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Skladany

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST BOWL: 2004, New Orleans
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 8 offense, 3 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Derek Thompson, WR Brelan Chancellor, LB Zach Orr, P Will Atterberry

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With so many starters back, it would seem as though the offense could be North Texas' strength. Offense has never really been coach McCarney's forte, but that side of the ball could be ahead of the defense next year.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: North Texas' stats, on both sides of the ball, were among the worst in the nation. That can't happen again if North Texas is to improve. McCarney has said he's already seen significant improvement over last year. Whether that's enough to get his team into bowl contention is another story.

OFFENSE

Lance Dunbar — North Texas' all-time leading rusher and one of the most explosive backs in the country — is gone, leaving a gaping hole in the offense.

Who will replace Dunbar? It could be Brandin Byrd. He's the most experienced back on the roster, but he logged only 20 carries last year and had one touchdown. To put that in perspective, Dunbar had two games last year in which he carried the ball 40 times.

Eight starters and many experienced reserves are back on offense for North Texas. The problem? Those players, even with Dunbar, yielded only the 96th-best offense in the country.

Quarterback Derek Thompson is symbolic of most of the rest of the offense — experienced but young. Transfer offensive lineman Cam Feldt, who spent a year at Arkansas after being labeled as one of the country's top line prospects, could have a considerable role.

Three of the top four receivers are back, including leader Brelan Chancellor. He and Chris Bynes, another returner, had nearly identical numbers last year. Chancellor had 37 catches for 457 yards and three touchdowns; Bynes had 37 catches for 442 yards and five scores.

DEFENSE

North Texas managed to come within a win of bowl eligibility last year with a statistically unimpressive defense. An influx of new bodies could help that situation, but there are depth concerns.

The Mean Green lost most of its top defensive playmakers, but linebacker and second-leading tackler Zachary Orr is back. Oklahoma transfer Marcus Trice should earn his way into a starting spot on a depleted defense.

Orr, Trice and the rest of the defense will be taking orders from new defensive coordinator John Skladany. Last year, when Skladany was at Central Florida, the Golden Knights finished ninth in the nation in total defense and scoring defense. UCF had two shutouts and held four teams to less than 10 points.

Skladany had some talent advantages there, but could help North Texas improve.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Led by Ray Guy Award candidate Will Atterberry, the North Texas special teams could be a strength. He was the top punter in the Sun Belt Conference, averaging 43.5 yards per attempt. Kicker Zach Olen is back, too.

Chancellor ranked fifth in the Sun Belt in kickoff returns (21.9-yard average) and racked up more than 1,000 yards.

OVERVIEW

The Mean Green won five games last season, its most since 2004, the last of North Texas' string of four bowl appearances. Combined with the wealth of experience the Mean Green has returning, there seems, on the surface, to be plenty of reasons for optimism.

But the loss of Dunbar and several key defensive players leave questions. Second-year coach Dan McCarney suffered a stroke in February, and though he coached through spring football, the former Big 12 coach will have to prove himself again.

TOP NEWCOMER

S Marcus Trice: After two seasons of limited playing time at Oklahoma, he returned to his home state and is expected to be a major contributor in a fresh-faced defensive backfield. Trice was considered one of the top defensive back prospects nationally coming out of high school.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**7**	**Derek Thompson***	**6-4**	**220**	**Jr.**
RB	24	Brandin Byrd	5-10	211	Jr.
WR	**81**	**Chris Bynes***	**6-1**	**220**	**Sr.**
WR	10	Ivan Delgado	6-2	205	Sr.
WR	**3**	**Brelan Chancellor***	**5-9**	**177**	**Jr.**
TE	1	Andrew Power*	6-5	258	Sr.
LT	**71**	**Antonio Johnson***	**6-5**	**285**	**So.**
LG	**57**	**Mason Y'Barbo***	**6-2**	**312**	**So.**
C	**60**	**Aaron Fortenberry***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
RG	**62**	**Cyril Lemon***	**6-3**	**313**	**So.**
RT	70	Coleman Feeley	6-5	305	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	44	Aaron Bellazin	6-2	255	Jr.
DT	97	Richard Abbe	6-4	319	Jr.
DT	**93**	**Brandon McCoy***	**6-2**	**270**	**Jr.**
DE	48	K.C. Obi	6-2	249	Sr.
LB	**35**	**Zach Orr***	**6-0**	**231**	**Jr.**
LB	45	Jeremy Phillips	6-3	215	Sr.
LB	**13**	**Michael Stojkovic***	**6-2**	**211**	**So.**
CB	6	Hilbert Jackson	6-1	183	Jr.
CB	2	D.Q. Johnson	5-11	185	Jr.
S	8	Marcus Trice	5-8	190	Jr.
S	27	Lairamie Lee	5-10	183	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**37**	**Zach Olen***	**5-10**	**221**	**Jr.**
P	**41**	**Will Atterberry***	**5-11**	**199**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at LSU
Sept. 8	TEXAS SOUTHERN
Sept. 15	at Kansas State
Sept. 22	TROY
Sept. 29	at FAU
Oct. 6	at Houston
Oct. 16	LOUISIANA
Oct. 27	at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 3	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 10	SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 17	at ULM
Nov. 24	at Western Kentucky

2011 RESULTS

L	at FIU	16-41
L	HOUSTON	23-48
L	at Alabama	0-41
W	INDIANA	24-21
L	at Tulsa	24-41
W	FAU	31-17
L	at Louisiana	10-30
W	ULM	38-21
L	at Arkansas State	14-37
W	at Troy	38-33
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY	21-31
W	MIDDLE TENNESSE	59-7

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.8	76
Rushing	152.4	66
Passing	189.3	87
Total	341.8	96
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.7	88
Rushing	163.5	70
Pass	265.8	104
Total	429.3	97
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 9	+ 0.75	15

RANKING

103 MIDDLE TENNESSEE | BLUE RAIDERS

Sun Belt rank: 8 | Record: 2-10 | Sun Belt record: 1-7 (8th) | Stadium: Floyd Stadium (30,788)

Photo by Tim Heitman-US PRESSWIRE

"I don't know if you can put your finger on one particular area, but we have to become a more mentally and physically tougher team."
— Coach Rick Stockstill

BLUE RAIDERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Rick Stockstill — At Middle Tennessee and overall: 35-40, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Buster Faulkner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Steve Ellis, Tyrone Nix

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010 season, GoDaddy.com
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Logan Kilgore, RB Benny Cunningham, WR Tavarres Jefferson, WR Kyle Griswould, DE Omar McClendon, DT Kendall Dangerfield, DT Jimmy Staten, SS Jajuan Harley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Blue Raiders have returning starters at quarterback, running back and receiver from a productive offense. The return of four starters on the defensive front, including a potential starting redshirt freshman, should lead to an improved run defense. The Raiders are particularly well-stocked at defensive end.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Newcomers are going to have to step up right away on the offensive line if the Raiders are going to take advantage of their experience at the skill positions. The defense still has critical spots to fill at linebacker and in the secondary.

OFFENSE

Middle Tennessee welcomes back the quarterback from an offense that produced 401.1 yards per game last season.

Junior quarterback Logan Kilgore threw for 2,231 yards, while completing 58.6 percent of his passes. He will have his top receiver from last year in senior Tavarres Jefferson (51 receptions for 398 yards) and experienced hands in junior Kyle Griswould and senior Anthony Amos.

But the Blue Raiders need a receiver to stretch the field with big-play capability. They had only one pass play that covered more than 50 yards in 2011 — Reggie Whatley's 82-yard touchdown reception against Troy.

Senior Benny Cunningham (501 yards rushing in eight games) and junior William Pratcher (585) return at running back. Junior Drayton Calhoun, a transfer from LSU, will also push for time there.

Three new starters must be found on the line to go alongside returning starters Alex Stuart, a senior who moved from center to guard in the spring, and junior guard Josh Walker.

DEFENSE

The key addition on this side might be first-year assistant Tyrone Nix, who will make the defensive calls while serving as co-coordinator with Steve Ellis.

Nix, who spent the last four years at Ole Miss and also has had impressive stints at his alma mater, Southern Mississippi, and South Carolina, inherits six returning starters from a unit that gave up 36.8 points and 441.1 yards per game.

Four starters return up front, including all-conference candidate Omar McLendon at end, but Alexandro Antoine, a redshirt freshman, came out of the spring ahead of one of last year's defensive end starters, Jiajuan Fennell.

Tackles Kendall Dangerfield and Jimmy Staten also are returning starters in the front four.

The Raiders have to find answers at linebacker — where junior Roderic Blunt is the only returning starter — and in the secondary.

The lone returning starter at defensive back is junior cornerback Kenneth Gilstrap, but the Raiders have high hopes for Florida State transfer safety Jajuan Harley. He sat out last year but could contend for All-Sun Belt honors in 2012.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Carlos Lopez, a transfer from Carson-Newman, looks to take over kicking responsibilities. He was 15 of 21 on field-goal attempts in three years at Carson-Newman and is eligible immediately as a graduate senior.

OVERVIEW

If the defense improves, especially against the run, Middle Tennessee could challenge for a spot in the top half of the conference. The Blue Raiders must cut down on turnovers (15 interceptions, 13 lost fumbles in 2011) to keep from putting the defense in bad field position.

TOP NEWCOMER

SS Jajuan Harley: Harley sat out last year after transferring from Florida State. He played in eight games for the Seminoles as a sophomore in 2010 after appearing in 11 games as a freshman, when he also saw action on the kickoff return team.

2011 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	10	**Logan Kilgore***	6-3	185	Jr.
RB	2	**Benny Cunningham***	5-10	205	Sr.
WR	80	Jamal Gray	6-0	194	Sr.
WR	9	Kyle Griswould	5-10	193	Jr.
WR	3	**Tavarres Jefferson***	5-9	191	Sr.
WR	86	**Anthony Amos***	5-11	181	Sr.
LT	73	Isaiah Anderson	6-4	266	So.
LG	65	**Alex Stuart***	6-2	288	Sr.
C	66	Micah James	6-3	320	Jr.
RG	77	**Josh Walker***	6-5	305	Jr.
RT	61	Jadareius Hamlin	6-2	268	Jr.
DEFENSE					
LE	85	**Omar McLendon***	6-3	242	Sr.
LT	96	**Kendall Dangerfield***	6-2	276	Sr.
RT	90	**Jimmy Staten***	6-4	300	Jr.
RE	45	Alexandro Antoine	6-1	238	Fr.
LB	35	Craig Allen	6-2	216	Jr.
LB	28	Christian Henry	6-0	221	So.
LB	33	**Roderic Blunt***	6-0	226	Jr.
LC	18	**Kenneth Gilstrap***	5-9	175	Jr.
RC	7	Khari Burke	5-8	185	So.
SS	36	Jajuan Harley	6-1	203	Jr.
FS	8	Sammy Seamster	6-1	194	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	38	Carlos Lopez	5-10	208	Sr.
P	36	Josh Davis	5-10	213	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	McNEESE STATE
Sept. 8	FAU
Sept. 15	at Memphis
Sept. 29	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 6	ULM
Oct. 13	at FIU
Oct. 20	at Mississippi State
Oct. 27	NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 1	at Western Kentucky
Nov. 17	at South Alabama
Nov. 24	TROY
Dec 1	at Arkansas State

2011 RESULTS

L	at Purdue	24-27
L	GEORGIA TECH	21-49
L	at Troy	35-38
W	MEMPHIS	38-31
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY (OT)	33-36
W	at FAU	38-14
L	LOUISIANA	20-45
L	at Tennessee	0-24
L	at ULM	14-42
L	ARKANSAS STATE	19-45
L	FIU	18-31
L	at North Texas	7-59

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.3	96
Rushing	146.8	69
Passing	254.3	37
Total	401.1	45
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	36.8	110
Rushing	229.5	114
Pass	211.6	44
Total	441.1	103
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-8	-0.67	100

RANKING

113 FLORIDA ATLANTIC | OWLS

Sun Belt rank: 9 Record: 1-11 Sun Belt record: 0-8 (9th) Stadium: FAU Stadium (30,000)

Photo by Steve Mitchell-US PRESSWIRE

Randell Johnson

"I want this team to develop a physical attitude."
— Coach Carl Pelini

OWLS at a GLANCE

COACH: Carl Pelini — At FAU and overall, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Wright
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Rekstis

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST BOWL: 2008, Motor City
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Melvin German, RB Jonathan Wallace, WR DeAndre Richardson, TE Nexon Dorvilus, LB Randell Johnson, LB David Hinds, CB Keith Reaser

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The up-tempo offense the Owls are going to use could create some mismatches if opposing defenses get caught with the wrong personnel on the field. At the very least, the spread gives the offense more of a chance for success than last year's pro set.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The new schemes on both sides of the ball figure to take some getting used to and conditioning will have to improve on offense. Quarterback is unsettled going into the fall and depth at wide receiver is a concern in the new spread attack.

OFFENSE

FAU is abandoning the pro-set scheme it played under coach Howard Schnellenberger and going with an up-tempo, no-huddle spread attack under first-year coach Carl Pelini.

The change should give new life to an offense that ranked last nationally, producing 248.8 yards a game.

The Owls have seven starters returning on offense, including senior quarterback Graham Wilbert, but he faced a challenge in the spring from sophomore Stephen Curtis. The competition will increase in the fall when junior college transfer Melvin German reports. German and Curtis have the advantage of previously running the spread.

With the Owls going to a one-back set, former fullback Xavier Stinson was penciled in at the beginning of the spring to replace Alfred Morris, FAU's all-time leading rusher. But the senior goes into the fall No. 2 behind junior college transfer Jonathan Wallace, who had a big spring.

Wide receiver is a concern. Junior DeAndre Richardson, the leading receiver with just 32 catches in 2011, and sophomore Marcus Cunningham (18 receptions) are the top returnees. Nexon Dorvilus (20 catches) is back at tight end.

The Owls have three returning starters on the line, including veteran Andy Czuprynski. Junior Jordan Sessa, who has fought injuries in the past, came out of the spring ahead of returning starter Jimmie Colley at center.

DEFENSE

The Owls are changing schemes, junking the 3-4 defense to go primarily with a four-man front and a five-man secondary.

FAU has a solid linebacking duo in David Hinds and Randell Johnson, who were 1-2 in tackles with 110 and 92, respectively, in 2011.

Three starters, including cornerbacks Keith Reaser and Treon Howard — who combined for four of FAU's 10 interceptions — are back in the secondary.

Additional help should be coming in the fall with the arrival of several junior college transfers, including tackle Brandin Bryant, linebacker Adarius Glanton and cornerback Tony Grimes.

Grimes began his collegiate career at Ole Miss and played at Arizona Western Community College last year, where he had four interceptions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore kicker Marcelo Bonani, the brother of South Florida kicker Maikon Bonani, goes into fall camp ahead of senior Vinny Zaccario, who was 7 of 11 on field-goal attempts in his first year on the job in 2011.

Junior Sean Dooley is looking to take over the punting duties, capably handled the past three years by Mickey Groody. Stephen Curtis, when not battling for the quarterback spot, is also making a push to be the punter.

OVERVIEW

The Owls play Georgia and Alabama in the first month, but the schedule is more favorable than last year, when they played their first five on the road. The season shouldn't be the disaster it was a year ago when they didn't win their first game until their 11th outing, but it's hard to see any more than three or four wins at best.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Melvin German: The junior college transfer (Pearl River, Miss.) is expected to compete for the starting job in the fall. He has experience running a spread attack and completed 65 percent of his passes last season for 3,121 yards and 21 touchdowns, while rushing for 180 yards and six scores.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	**14**	**Graham Wilbert***	**6-6**	**225**	**Sr.**
RB	30	Jonathan Wallace	6-0	198	Jr.
WR	**2**	**DeAndre Richardson***	**6-2**	**180**	**Sr.**
WR	**83**	**Marcus Cunningham***	**6-0**	**175**	**So.**
WR	89	Derek Moise	6-2	180	So.
TE	**9**	**Nexon Dorvilus***	**6-4**	**225**	**Jr.**
LT	63	DeAndre Williams	6-5	290	So.
LG	**56**	**Andy Czuprynski***	**6-5**	**270**	**Sr.**
C	79	Jordan Sessa	6-5	280	Jr.
RG	72	Stern Vile	6-5	335	Jr.
RT	**55**	**Joe Bailey***	**6-5**	**290**	**Jr.**

DEFENSE

DE	**31**	**Cory Henry***	**6-3**	**238**	**Jr.**
LT	**96**	**Jimmy Jean***	**6-2**	**290**	**Sr.**
RT	59	Robinson Eugene	6-5	230	Fr.
DE	72	David Baptiste	5-11	250	Jr.
LB	**11**	**David Hinds***	**6-2**	**234**	**Sr.**
LB	**15**	**Randell Johnson***	**6-4**	**230**	**Jr.**
CB	**3**	**Keith Reaser***	**6-2**	**180**	**Sr.**
CB	**13**	**Treon Howard***	**5-11**	**175**	**Jr.**
NB	24	Brentley Harstad	6-1	187	Jr.
SS	26	Jeremy McKnight	5-10	180	Jr.
FS	**6**	**Demetrius Williamson***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	92	Marcelo Bonani	5-11	160	So.
P	67	Sean Dooley	5-11	195	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	WAGNER
Sept. 8	at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 15	at Georgia
Sept. 22	at Alabama
Sept. 29	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13	at ULM
Oct. 20	at South Alabama
Oct. 27	TROY
Nov. 3	at Navy
Nov. 10	at Western Kentucky
Nov. 16	FIU
Dec. 1	LOUISIANA

2011 RESULTS

L	at Florida	3-41
L	at Michigan State	0-44
L	at Auburn	14-30
L	at Louisiana	34-37
L	at North Texas	17-31
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY	0-20
L	MIDDLE TENNESSE	14-38
L	ARKANSAS STATE	21-39
L	at FIU	7-41
L	at Troy	7-34
W	UAB	38-35
L	ULM	0-26

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	12.9	119
Rushing	105.7	108
Passing	143.1	111
Total	248.8	120

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.7	103
Rushing	168.9	77
Pass	223.3	59
Total	392.3	69

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-9	-0.75	108

RANKING

121 SOUTH ALABAMA | JAGUARS

Sun Belt rank: 10 | Record: 6-4 (FCS) | Stadium: Ladd-Peebles Stadium (40,000)

Jake Johnson

Photo by John Albright / Icon SMI

"We've got to elevate our play. With that, I think there's been a heightened sense of urgency about what they do." — Coach Joey Jones

JAGUARS at a GLANCE

COACH: Joey Jones — At South Alabama: 23-4, 3 years; **OVERALL:** 26-11, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robert Matthews
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Clark

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB C.J. Bennett, RB Brandon Ross, WR T.J. Glover, TE Greg Hollinger, DE Pat Moore, LB Jake Johnson, LB Enrique Williams, CB Darrius Morrow

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: There is talent and depth at running back and linebacker. In general, the Jags are in good shape at the skill positions. The new offense should make them effective and create problems for opposing defenses.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line, especially in a new scheme, must develop depth and handle its business. Likewise, the secondary, an area of emphasis the past two seasons, must also develop depth and make plays as the program adjusts to a new league.

OFFENSE

The Jaguars will have a completely different look this season with the hiring of Robert Matthews as offensive coordinator.

He put in a spread offense, employing a no-huddle, fast-paced approach similar to that used by Southern Miss and Oklahoma State, the previous two teams with which Matthews was associated.

The skill positions feature talent, but the success or failure of the USA offense will be predicated by the offensive line. Three starters must be replaced, but center Trey Clark and guard Melvin Meggs are back. Greg Hollinger has moved from wide receiver to tight end in the new offense and is a good fit.

C.J. Bennett will return at quarterback with Trey Fetner pushing for time. Running back is deep with Brandon Ross expected back after 18 months away, and Kendall Houston, Demetre Baker and J.J. Keels add depth.

At wide receiver, T.J. Glover, Bryant Lavender, Jereme' Jones and Corey Waldon are the top targets.

DEFENSE

Seven starters are back on a defense that is deep at linebacker and improved on the line and in the secondary. Coordinator Bill Clark's aggressive, attacking style has been a plus for the Jags in their first three seasons, and they are seeking to produce more sacks and pressure on the quarterback this year.

Jake Johnson leads a linebacker corps that also includes Enrique Williams and Clifton Crews as starters. The position has good depth, including Maleki Harris and Bryson James.

The secondary has been the central focus for improvement the past two seasons and there is talent and quickness there. Alabama transfer B.J. Scott leads the way at safety, with junior college transfer Darrius Morrow stepping in during spring drills to grab a cornerback slot.

Strong safety Charles Harris and cornerback Qudarius Ford will start, with Gabe Loper, Charles Watson and Jonathan Cameron getting playing time.

Up front, ends Pat Moore and Romelle Jones are keys to success, with Andy Dalgleish and Randon Carnathan anchoring things at tackle. Look for Alex Page, Anthony Taylor and Montavious Williams to be factors as well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Jordan Means is gone, but Michel Chapuseaux is ready to handle field goals and kickoffs. Scott Garber is back as the Jags' punter. Glover, Keels and Jones will share kickoff and punt return duties. All have good speed and instincts.

OVERALL

This is a key season for the fledgling program. It marks the final year of the Jags' two-year transition to Football Bowl Subdivision status (they aren't eligible to win the Sun Belt title, but their games count as conference games). And it is a season that features a 13-game schedule — three more than last season — and eight games against Sun Belt foes, giving the Jags a measuring stick of what's to come and how far the program has progressed.

TOP NEWCOMER

CB Darrius Morrow: The junior college transfer is not big, but he's aggressive, has excellent quickness and instincts, and plays big. He adds leadership and a touch of swagger to a secondary that needs someone to step forward.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	15	**C.J. Bennett***	**6-0**	**205**	**So.**
RB	33	Demetre Baker	6-1	215	So.
WR	8	**Bryant Lavender***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**
WR	24	T.J. Glover	5-9	170	So.
WR	11	Jereme' Jones	5-8	160	So.
TE	10	Greg Hollinger	6-4	225	Jr.
LT	57	Tremain Smith	6-4	305	Sr.
LG	72	Drew Dearman	6-3	310	So.
C	70	**Trey Clark***	**6-1**	**270**	**Sr.**
RG	77	**Melvin Meggs***	**6-3**	**300**	**So.**
RT	73	Shaun Artz	6-4	290	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	47	Pat Moore	6-3	235	Jr.
NT	98	Andy Dalgleish	6-2	275	Sr.
DT	93	**Randon Carnathan***	**6-1**	**280**	**Jr.**
DE	90	**Romelle Jones***	**6-2**	**275**	**Jr.**
LB	25	**Clifton Crews***	**6-3**	**220**	**Jr.**
LB	42	**Jake Johnson***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	28	**Enrique Williams***	**6-0**	**235**	**Jr.**
CB	22	Qudarius Ford	5-7	165	So.
CB	4	Darrius Morrow	5-10	170	Jr.
SS	21	**Charles Harris***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
FS	1	**B.J. Scott***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	39	Michel Chapuseaux	5-8	185	Jr.
P	40	**Scott Garber***	**5-9**	**195**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	UTSA
Sept. 8	NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 15	at NC State
Sept. 22	at Mississippi State
Sept. 29	TROY
Oct. 13	at Arkansas State
Oct. 20	FAU
Oct. 27	at ULM
Nov. 3	FIU
Nov. 10	at North Texas
Nov. 17	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 24	at Louisiana
Dec. 1	at Hawaii

2011 RESULTS

W	WEST ALABAMA	20-10
W	LAMAR	30-8
L	at NC State	13-35
L	at Kent State	25-33
W	at Texas-San Antonio (2OT)	30-27
W	TENNESSEE-MARTIN	33-30
L	at Georgia State (2OT)	20-27
W	HENDERSON (ARK.) STATE	28-3
W	MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE	35-3
L	CAL POLY	10-41

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK*
Scoring	24.4	70
Rushing	154.6	56
Passing	172.2	91
Total	326.8	88
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.7	27
Rushing	142.7	41
Pass	167.0	10
Total	309.7	16
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.40	83

(*FCS team in 2011)

RANKING

33 NOTRE DAME | FIGHTING IRISH

Independent | Record: 8-5 | Stadium: Notre Dame Stadium (80,795)

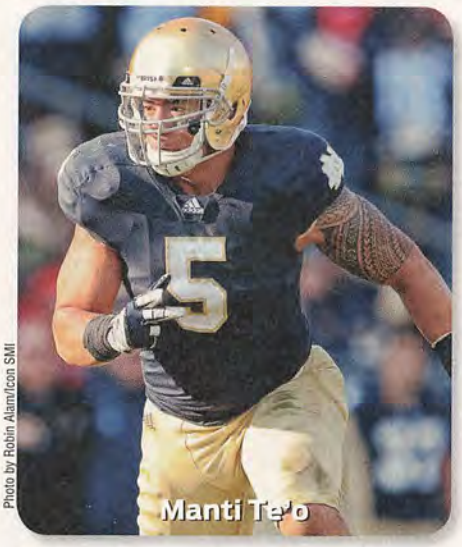


Photo by Robin Alam/Icon SMI

"I think there were some strides made, but clearly we're not there yet."
— Coach Brian Kelly, on ND's quarterback situation

FIGHTING IRISH at a GLANCE

COACH: Brian Kelly — At Notre Dame: 16-10, 2 years
OVERALL: 69-32, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chuck Martin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bob Diaco

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: N/A
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Cierre Wood, RB/WR Theo Riddick, TE Tyler Eifert, LT Zack Martin, DE Stephon Tuitt, LB Manti Te'o, LB Prince Shembo, S Jamoris Slaughter

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Wood and Riddick give the Irish a strong backfield, and Eifert is versatile enough to play tight end, any receiver position and even running back. Te'o is one of the best linebackers in the game and a tackling machine. Tuitt can play at end or the interior, and Slaughter is flexible enough to be effective at safety, cornerback and linebacker.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Notre Dame has to find a quarterback that can cut down on the interceptions — the Irish had 17 passes picked off last season — and it doesn't help that WR Michael Floyd is gone. None of Notre Dame's primary cornerbacks have started a game.

OFFENSE

Brian Kelly, entering his third season at Notre Dame, is looking for a quarterback again, with the competition heading to a camp showdown.

Junior Tommy Rees is the most experienced of the four options, but he also has been turnover-prone and was facing misdemeanor charges in May for an incident at an off-campus party.

Junior Andrew Hendrix has the arm strength and running ability to lead Kelly's spread offense, but he lacks experience and also struggles to protect the ball.

Everett Golson, who didn't play last season, displayed his dual-threat ability in the spring game, throwing for 120 yards with two touchdowns and running for 25 yards. Touted freshman Gunner Kiel arrived in the spring but doesn't appear ready ... yet.

Cierre Wood and Theo Riddick will team up in the backfield. Riddick returns to the position after spending the past two seasons at slot receiver. Wood ran for 1,102 yards last season.

Tight end Tyler Eifert is the main threat in the passing game after catching 63 passes for 803 yards with five touchdowns last year. Receivers TJ Jones, John Goodman and Robby Toma need to provide more than last year's combined 638 yards.

Center Braxston Cave returns from a foot injury after starting the first nine games last year, and left tackle Zack Martin and left guard Chris Watt started every game last year.

DEFENSE

The decision of linebacker Manti Te'o to return for his senior season solidified the middle linebacker position. He's made 261 tackles over the past two seasons.

Defensive ends Stephon Tuitt and Kapron Lewis-Moore, along with nose guard Louis Nix III, form a starting unit that combined for 107 tackles and 11.5 tackles for loss. They will be backed up by Kona Schwenke, Chase Hounshell, Tony Springmann and Sheldon Day.

Safeties Jamoris Slaughter and Zeke Motta have combined to play in 74 games, with 32 starts and 192 tackles and four interceptions. The emergence of Austin Collinsworth at safety allows Notre Dame to move Slaughter, who can also play cornerback and linebacker, around the formation.

Lo Wood, Bennett Jackson and Josh Atkinson will be counted on to replace last year's starting cornerbacks Gary Gray and Robert Blanton.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Nick Tausch, who connected on 14 consecutive field-goal attempts as a freshman, sat behind David Ruffer last season but is back on the job in 2012. Ben Turk will handle punting duties after averaging 40.3 yards last year.

George Atkinson III was strong on kick returns, averaging 26.1 yards and scoring two touchdowns. Freshman Davonte' Neal might be able to breathe life into a punt return game that averaged only 3.7 yards per return.

OVERVIEW

With an unsettled quarterback position, Notre Dame takes on one of the nation's toughest schedules with games against Michigan, Michigan State, Miami, Stanford, Oklahoma and USC. Kelly says eight-win seasons are not the standard that is set at Notre Dame, but the Irish would do well to match that number this season.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Davonte' Neal: The Irish won a post-Signing Day recruiting battle for Neal, who was selected the Gatorade Arizona Player of the Year after his junior and senior seasons. He scored 30 touchdowns on offense (16 receiving, 14 rushing) and added five touchdowns on kickoff and punt returns as senior.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**11**	**Tommy Rees***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**
RB	**20**	**Cierre Wood***	**6-0**	**215**	**Sr.**
WR	81	John Goodman	6-3	207	Sr.
WR	**7**	**T.J. Jones***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
WR	9	Robby Toma	5-9	185	Sr.
TE	**80**	**Tyler Eifert***	**6-6**	**251**	**Sr.**
LT	**70**	**Zack Martin***	**6-4**	**304**	**Sr.**
LG	**66**	**Chris Watt***	**6-3**	**310**	**Sr.**
C	**52**	**Braxston Cave***	**6-3**	**304**	**Sr.**
RG	72	Nick Martin	6-4	285	So.
RT	74	Christian Lombard	6-5	309	Jr.
DEFENSE					
DE	**89**	**Kapron Lewis-Moore***	**6-4**	**306**	**Sr.**
NG	**9**	**Louis Nix III***	**6-3**	**326**	**Jr.**
DE	7	Stephon Tuitt	6-6	295	So.
LB	**65**	**Prince Shembo***	**6-2**	**250**	**Jr.**
LB	13	Danny Spond	6-2	248	Jr.
LB	**5**	**Manti Te'o***	**6-2**	**255**	**Sr.**
LB	**48**	**Dan Fox***	**6-3**	**240**	**Sr.**
CB	2	Bennett Jackson	6-0	185	Jr.
CB	23	Lo Wood	5-10	195	Jr.
SS	17	Zeke Motta	6-2	215	Sr.
FS	**26**	**Jamoris Slaughter***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	40	Nick Tausch	6-0	201	Sr.
P	**35**	**Ben Turk***	**5-11**	**196**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Navy (Dublin, Ireland)
Sept. 8	PURDUE
Sept. 15	at Michigan State
Sept. 22	MICHIGAN
Oct. 6	vs. Miami (Chicago)
Oct. 13	STANFORD
Oct. 20	BYU
Oct. 27	at Oklahoma
Nov. 3	PITTSBURGH
Nov. 10	at Boston College
Nov. 17	WAKE FOREST
Nov. 24	at USC

2011 RESULTS

L	SOUTH FLORIDA	20-23
L	at Michigan	31-35
W	MICHIGAN STATE	31-13
W	at Pittsburgh	15-12
W	at Purdue	38-10
W	AIR FORCE	59-33
L	USC	17-31
W	NAVY	56-14
W	at Wake Forest	24-17
W	MARYLAND	45-21
W	BOSTON COLLEGE	16-14
L	at Stanford	14-28
	Champs Sports Bowl	
L	vs. Florida State	18-14

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.2	49
Rushing	160.4	54
Passing	252.6	40
Total	413.0	35
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.7	24
Rushing	138.9	47
Pass	205.8	38
Total	344.7	30
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-15	-1.15	118

RANKING

39 BYU | COUGARS

Independent | Record: 10-3 | Stadium: LaVell Edwards Stadium (64,045)

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

"Once he gets out of the pocket, he makes plays on his own."
— WR Cody Hoffman on multi-threat QB Riley Nelson

COUGARS at a GLANCE

COACH: Bronco Mendenhall — At BYU and overall: 66-24, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brandon Doman
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bronco Mendenhall

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007, Mountain West
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Riley Nelson, WR Cody Hoffman, OG Braden Hansen, DE Ian Dulan, LB Brandon Ogletree, LB Uona Kaveinga, CB Preston Hadley, K Justin Sorensen

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Junior WR Cody Hoffman is as solid a receiver as BYU has seen since Austin Collie. He has a sixth sense for Nelson's change-of-direction plays. On the other side, the linebackers should be among one of the best units in the country. The Cougars were No. 13 nationally in total defense, yielding 313.4 yards a game.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The running game doesn't have a breakaway threat and there are some holes to fill on the offensive line. The Cougars improved last year as Nelson grew into the starting role. The biggest challenge this time might be maintaining focus against a weak November schedule.

OFFENSE

Consider quarterback Riley Nelson as BYU's version of Tim Tebow.

"Just when you think you have him down, he throws it sidearm or turns and throws to the other side of the field," said Cougars' eighth-year coach Bronco Mendenhall.

Nelson took a circuitous route to his first spring ball as an incumbent starter. He started as true freshman for Utah State in 2006, served a church mission in Barcelona and transferred to BYU. A shoulder injury derailed his 2010 season, but then he sent big-time recruit Jakes Heaps packing for Kansas.

His final play of 2011 vs. Tulsa in the Armed Forces Bowl set the stage for this season. BYU coaches wanted Nelson to spike the ball with the seconds ticking away. Nelson called an audible, faked the spike and connected from 2 yards out for Cody Hoffman's third touchdown in a 24-21 thriller.

Hoffman, the bowl MVP and Nelson's roommate, has a sixth sense for anticipating the quarterback's next move. Hoffman returns with another big receiver, sophomore Ross Apo (6-3, 206). They combined for nearly 1,400 yards and 19 touchdowns last season.

The turning point of 2011 came when Nelson averted an upset by Utah State. At the time, BYU was languishing at No. 78 in the country in third-down conversions, only to finish No. 5.

With an adequate running game lacking in breakaway threats, Nelson will bear most of the pressure to move the offense. There are some holes in the offensive line, and the Cougars are looking to revive their tight end dynasty.

DEFENSE

BYU has big-name returning linebacker starters Kyle Van Noy, Brandon Ogletree and Uona Kaveinga, plus returning missionaries and former starters Ian Dulan and Russell Tialavea on the defensive line.

With all that, BYU appears capable of again dominating the line of scrimmage.

Mendenhall — who doubles as defensive coordinator — has the luxury of rotating in fresh legs. He also has one of the most intriguing players in the land in Ghana import Ezekiel Ansah — if he masters the nuances of the game.

Ansah, nicknamed "Ziggy," originally came to BYU on a track scholarship. Now 6-6, 270 pounds, he grew out of his sprinter's body and discovered American football. He's a backup end/outside linebacker.

Standout senior corner Preston Hadley and junior strong safety Daniel Sorensen return in the secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

This is another Cougar strength, featuring placekicker Justin Sorensen, who played in the 2008 U.S. Army All-American game, punter Riley Stephenson and Hoffman, who returned a kickoff for a 93-yard touchdown last fall.

OVERVIEW

The Cougars enter their second year of independence with the talent and experience to compete with the likes of three Pac-12 foes, Notre Dame and Georgia Tech. Four WAC opponents provide insurance for BYU to easily qualify for a pre-arranged Poinsettia Bowl bid. A BCS debate is not beyond possibility.

TOP NEWCOMER

OT Ryker Matthews: He would have played as a true freshman a year ago if not for a foot injury forcing surgery and a medical redshirt. He learned from the best — team leader and graduated offensive lineman Matt Reynolds.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	13	**Riley Nelson***	6-0	196	Sr.
RB	42	Michael Alisa	6-1	213	Jr.
FB	35	Zed Mendenhall	5-11	245	Sr.
WR	1	Ross Apo	6-3	206	So.
WR	2	**Cody Hoffman***	6-4	208	Jr.
TE	80	Marcus Mathews	6-4	208	Jr.
LT	72	Ryker Mathews	6-6	313	Fr.
LG	76	**Braden Hansen***	6-6	313	Sr.
C	78	**Houston Reynolds***	6-2	296	Jr.
RG	74	Brock Stringham	6-6	287	So.
RT	75	**Braden Brown***	6-6	301	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	55	**Eathyn Manumaleuna***	6-2	294	Sr.
NT	98	**Romney Fuga***	6-2	321	Sr.
DE	39	Ian Dulan	6-1	270	Sr.
LB	2	Spencer Hadley	6-1	230	Jr.
LB	4	**Uona Kaveinga***	5-11	236	Sr.
LB	44	**Brandon Ogletree***	5-11	228	Sr.
LB	3	**Kyle Van Noy***	6-3	235	Jr.
CB	6	Jordan Johnson	5-10	185	So.
CB	7	**Preston Hadley***	6-0	200	Sr.
SS	9	**Daniel Sorensen***	6-2	206	Jr.
FS	1	Joe Sampson	5-10	213	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	37	**Justin Sorensen***	6-1	232	Jr.
P	99	**Riley Stephenson***	6-0	196	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 8	WEBER STATE
Sept. 15	at Utah
Sept. 22	at Boise State
Sept. 29	HAWAII
Oct. 5	UTAH STATE
Oct. 13	OREGON STATE
Oct. 20	at Notre Dame
Oct. 27	at Georgia Tech
Nov. 10	IDAHO
Nov. 17	at San Jose State
Nov. 24	at New Mexico State

2011 RESULTS

W	at Ole Miss	14-13
L	at Texas	16-17
L	UTAH	10-54
W	UCF	24-17
W	UTAH STATE	27-24
W	SAN JOSE STATE	29-16
W	at Oregon State	38-28
W	IDAHO STATE	56-3
L	at TCU	28-38
W	IDAHO	42-7
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	42-7
W	at Hawaii	41-20
	Armed Forces Bowl	
W	vs. Tulsa	24-21

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.1	42
Rushing	160.3	55
Passing	245.4	47
Total	405.7	41
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.4	22
Rushing	112.5	19
Pass	200.9	32
Total	313.4	13
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-2	-0.15	74

RANKING

80 NAVY | MIDSHIPMEN

Independent | Record:5-7 | Stadium: Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium (34,000)

Photo by Steve Beyer

Matt Warrick

"I don't like losing, in fact, I hate losing, so we're going to take a close look at everything we do to make sure we get things turned around next season."
— Coach Ken Niumatalolo

MIDSHIPMEN at a GLANCE

COACH: Ken Niumatalolo — At Navy and overall: 32-21, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ivin Jasper
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Buddy Green

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: 2010, Poinsettia
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 5 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Trey Miller, FB Noah Copeland, SB Gee Gee Greene, LG Josh Cabral, LB Matt Warrick, LB Brye French, S Tra'ves Bush, P Pablo Beltran

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Navy has a stable of talented slotbacks, led by Greene, fellow returning starter John Howell and offensive captain Bo Snelson. The secondary is loaded with experience. Inside linebackers make most of the tackles in Navy's defensive system, and Matt Warrick was outstanding last season, while Brye French was phenomenal during spring camp.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Navy graduated three multi-year starters along the offensive line and will be thrusting a pair of sophomores — center Bradyn Heap and right guard Jake Zuzek — into the heart of the unit.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Trey Miller played in seven games last season and gained valuable experience. The Georgia native relieved injured starter Kriss Proctor against East Carolina and led a strong comeback by throwing for 126 yards and two touchdowns. He made his first career start at Notre Dame the following week.

Coach Ken Niumatalolo said Miller has a long way to go in terms of understanding and executing Navy's triple-option offense. True. But Miller is a more dynamic passer than Proctor, and Navy intends to take advantage. The Midshipmen worked on some shotgun formation packages during spring camp.

Navy must replace six starters on offense, including starting fullback Alexander Teich and three multi-year starters from the line.

Noah Copeland, who impressed the coaching staff in practice as a plebe, will get first crack at the fullback job that is so critical to Navy's option attack. At 5-10, 205, Copeland would be the smallest fullback of the current triple-option era, but also the fastest and most elusive.

Gee Gee Greene, the team's leading returning rusher, leads a deep, talented stable of slotbacks. John Howell and offensive captain Bo Snelson are steady, reliable and versatile.

Left guard Josh Cabral, a third-year starter, is the veteran anchor of the line.

DEFENSE

While Navy returns six starters on defense, it did take some serious hits with 18 lettermen graduating. None was more valuable than end Jabaree Tuani, a team captain who ranks second at Navy in career sacks and tackles for loss.

Wes Henderson, who started three games at right end and saw significant action at nose guard in passing situations, is the most experienced returning defensive lineman.

Matt Warrick, who led the team with 103 tackles in 2011, will be joined at inside linebacker by defensive captain Brye French.

Senior Tra'ves Bush started nine games at outside linebacker last season but will move back to his natural safety position. Bush was the team's second-leading tackler with 93.

Senior David Sperry started all 12 games at cornerback, while free safety Chris Ferguson and cornerback Parrish Gaines emerged as starters toward the end of last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicking was a major problem for Navy last season as Jon Teague missed five field goals and four extra points. Considering the Mids lost five games by a total of 11 points, those misses were critical.

None of the returning kickers impressed during spring drills, so the competition will be wide-open in the fall, with the possibility a freshman could earn the job. Pablo Beltran was the starting punter as a plebe, averaging 37.5 yards.

OVERVIEW

Navy lost five games by three points or less, including one-point defeats to Rutgers and service academy rival Air Force. Uncharacteristic mistakes, untimely turnovers and the aforementioned placekicking problems were the difference. Niumatalolo has vowed to make the Mids mentally and physically tougher and hopes that produces a turnaround.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Josh Tate: After serving on the scout team and playing in junior varsity games as a freshman, Tate made a rapid ascent up the depth chart during spring camp. Fast, aggressive and a sure tackler, Tate emerged as the starter at the outside linebacker position known as "Striker."

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	3	Trey Miller	6-0	199	Jr.
FB	43	Noah Copeland	5-10	205	So.
SB	**21**	**Gee Gee Greene***	**5-8**	**185**	**Sr.**
SB	**33**	**John Howell***	**5-8**	**188**	**Sr.**
WR	86	Brandon Turner	6-4	224	Sr.
WR	**85**	**Matt Aiken***	**6-0**	**195**	**Jr.**
LT	70	Graham Vickers	6-1	280	Jr.
LG	**65**	**Josh Cabral***	**6-3**	**297**	**Sr.**
C	54	Bradyn Heap	6-3	280	So.
RG	61	Jake Zuzek	6-0	318	So.
RT	**78**	**Andrew Barker***	**6-4**	**275**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	99	Wes Henderson	6-2	255	Sr.
NG	69	Barry Dabney	6-1	297	Jr.
DE	49	Collin Sturdivant	6-3	242	Sr.
LB	41	Josh Tate	5-11	203	So.
LB	**50**	**Brye French***	**6-1**	**216**	**Sr.**
LB	**51**	**Matt Warrick***	**6-2**	**229**	**Sr.**
LB	48	Keegan Wetzel	6-3	218	Sr.
CB	**24**	**Parrish Gaines***	**6-2**	**196**	**So.**
CB	**28**	**David Sperry***	**5-11**	**182**	**Sr.**
SS	**9**	**Tra'ves Bush***	**5-10**	**192**	**Sr.**
FS	**23**	**Chris Ferguson***	**6-2**	**195**	**So.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	49	Stephen Picchini	6-0	180	Jr.
P	**81**	**Pablo Beltran***	**6-2**	**225**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Notre Dame (Dublin, Ireland)
Sept. 15	at Penn State
Sept. 22	VMI
Sept. 29	SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 6	at Air Force
Oct. 13	at Central Michigan
Oct. 20	INDIANA
Oct. 27	at East Carolina
Nov. 3	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 10	at Troy
Nov. 17	TEXAS STATE
Dec. 8	vs. Army (Philadelphia, PA)

2011 RESULTS

W	DELAWARE	40-17
W	at Western Kentucky	40-14
L	at South Carolina	21-24
L	AIR FORCE (OT)	34-35
L	SOUTHERN MISS	35-63
L	at Rutgers	20-21
L	EAST CAROLINA	35-38
L	at Notre Dame	14-56
W	TROY	42-14
W	at SMU	24-17
L	at San Jose State	24-27
W	ARMY	27-21

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.7	47
Rushing	312.3	4
Passing	85.8	119
Total	398.0	48

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.9	78
Rushing	186.9	92
Passing	226.9	67
Total	413.8	86

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 9	+ 0.75	15

RANKING

105 ARMY | BLACK KNIGHTS

Independent | Record: 3-9 | Stadium: Michie Stadium (40,000)

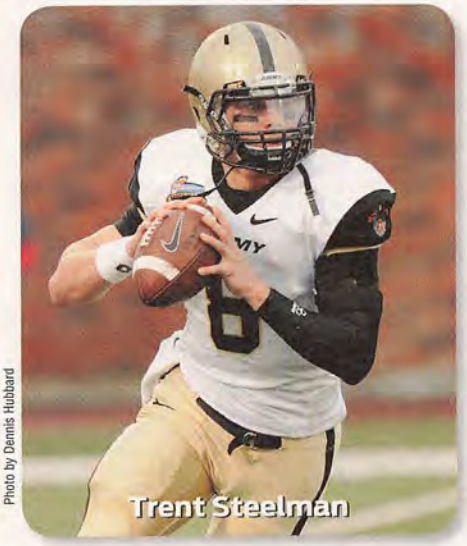


Photo by Dennis Hubbard

"Everything was the perfect storm with last year's defensive line. ... We will grow from that."
— Co-defensive coordinator Payam Saadat

BLACK KNIGHTS at a GLANCE

COACH: Rich Ellerson — At Army: 15-22, 3 years
OVERALL: 75-63, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ian Shields
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Payam Saadat, Chris Smeland

RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 8 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Trent Steelman, RB Raymond Maples, FB Larry Dixon, C Ryan Powis, DE Jarrett Mackey, DE/LB Zach Watts, LB Geoff Bacon, CB Josh Jackson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Army led the nation in rushing (346.5) last season and returns its top seven rushers, including Steelman, a three-year starter. Army's triple-option offense relies on strong interior blocking, which is solid with the return of senior OG Frank Allen, a two-year starter, senior OG Matt Villanti and sophomore C Ryan Powis. This year's defense will be more versatile, quicker and experienced.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Army fumbled a nation-high 36 times, losing 22, in 2011. The Black Knights worked in the spring to correct the issue but still put footballs on the ground. Army completed three or less passes in nine of 12 games in 2011. Army has improved its size defensively up front but can the line hold up against bigger teams?

OFFENSE

Quarterback Trent Steelman, who guided Army to an Armed Forces Bowl win as a sophomore, had a team-high 12 rushing touchdowns last season despite missing all or some of five games late with ankle and knee injuries.

If Steelman's passing (24 of 45, 424 yards) improves and he stays healthy, Army will be tough to stop.

Army's backfield may be its deepest in 20 years. Army returns 4,062 yards and 31 touchdowns from last year's team.

Junior Raymond Maples' breakaway speed and power between the tackles led to a sophomore breakout season (1,066 yards).

Sophomore Larry Dixon is an athletic halfback packed in a fullback's body. Dixon, who topped Army running backs with five touchdowns, unseated 1,000-yard rusher Jared Hassin in week eight.

Senior Malcolm Brown is Army's most versatile back. Brown averaged 7.1 yards per carry and may be the team's best receiver. Hassin, a senior, switched from fullback and could be Maples' backup.

Army's returning wide receivers caught a combined four passes in 2011. Sophomore Chevaughn Lawrence has all the tools to be a big-play receiver. Junior Patrick Laird, a sure-handed receiver and solid blocker, should play opposite Lawrence.

DEFENSE

Army's defense was young and undersized last season. The Black Knights started six freshmen and lost top defensive end Jarrett Mackey to a knee injury in the season opener.

Mackey, a starter in 2010, provides stability and skill to the front four. Senior Zach Watts is an undersized, tenacious defensive end, who can also play outside linebacker.

The line was dealt a blow when senior defensive tackle A.J. Mackey, who started all 12 games in 2011, left the team in the spring. But the emergence of defensive tackles Richard Glover and Bobby Kough allowed Holt Zalneraitis to move outside to his natural position.

Army will miss the leadership and play of linebackers Steve Erzinger and Andrew Rodriguez. Senior Nate Combs, who had nine tackles and two sacks against Navy last season, should step up as an emotional leader. Sophomore middle linebacker Geoff Bacon, who had a 70-yard interception return against Vanderbilt, makes plays from sideline to sideline.

Senior cornerback Josh Jackson, a two-year starter, anchors a secondary in which its top two free safeties Thomas Holloway (linebacker) and Tyler Dickson (cornerback) switched positions in the spring.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The kicking job will be decided in the preseason between senior Eric Osteen, who was the team's kickoff specialist last season, junior Billy Fisher and promising freshman Dan Grochowski.

The punting is in good hands with senior Chris Boldt, who had 10 of his 31 punts fall inside the opponent's 20-yard line last season.

OVERVIEW

With its most balanced team in Rich Ellerson's four seasons, Army will look to get back to its 2010 level, when it posted its first winning season since 1996 and earned a bowl victory. The Black Knights were competitive with Navy and Air Force last season but still fell to 0-6 against its service-academy rivals in the Ellerson era.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Bobby Kough: Kough, a junior who has yet to play a down, is expected to make an impact with some much-needed physical play up front. Kough's will to battle through minor injuries impressed coaches in the spring.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**8**	**Trent Steelman***	**6-0**	**207**	**Sr.**
RB	**1**	**Raymond Maples***	**6-1**	**218**	**Jr.**
RB	23	Malcolm Brown	5-11	181	Sr.
FB	**26**	**Larry Dixon***	**6-0**	**238**	**So.**
WR	81	Patrick Laird	6-3	219	Jr.
WR	21	Chevaughn Lawrence	6-3	195	So.
LT	58	Ben Jebb	6-5	243	Sr.
LG	**79**	**Frank Allen***	**6-4**	**261**	**Sr.**
C	**52**	**Ryan Powis***	**6-0**	**248**	**So.**
RG	**71**	**Matt Villanti***	**6-3**	**262**	**Sr.**
RT	66	Will Wilson	6-2	290	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	34	Jarrett Mackey	6-1	235	Sr.
DT	99	Bobby Kough	6-3	239	Jr.
DT	98	Richard Glover	6-0	247	So.
DE	**45**	**Holt Zalneraitis***	**6-2**	**224**	**Jr.**
LB	**22**	**Nate Combs***	**6-1**	**216**	**Sr.**
LB	**6**	**Geoff Bacon***	**6-0**	**207**	**So.**
LB	5	Justin Trimble	5-11	200	Jr.
CB	**14**	**Josh Jackson***	**6-0**	**182**	**Sr.**
CB	17	Tyler Dickson	5-11	195	Jr.
SS	**9**	**Hayden Pierce***	**6-3**	**187**	**So.**
FS	4	Ty Shrader	5-8	184	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	37	Eric Osteen	6-1	187	Sr.
P	**18**	**Chris Boldt***	**6-0**	**181**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 8	at San Diego State
Sept. 15	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 22	at Wake Forest
Sept. 29	STONY BROOK
Oct. 6	BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 13	KENT STATE
Oct. 20	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 27	BALL STATE
Nov. 3	AIR FORCE
Nov. 10	at Rutgers
Nov. 17	TEMPLE
Dec. 8	vs. Navy (Philadelphia, PA)

2011 RESULTS

L	at Northern Illinois	26-49
L	SAN DIEGO STATE	20-23
W	NORTHWESTERN	21-14
L	at Ball State	21-48
W	TULANE	45-6
L	at Miami (OH)	28-35
L	at Vanderbilt	21-44
W	FORDHAM	55-0
L	at Air Force	14-24
L	RUTGERS	12-27
L	at Temple	14-42
L	at Navy	21-27

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.8	76
Rushing	346.5	1
Passing	50.4	120
Total	396.9	49

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.3	71
Rushing	194.9	100
Pass	164.3	5
Total	359.3	43

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
-9	-0.75	108

BOWL SCHEDULE

The top level of college football is back with 35 bowls, the same as last season and about the maximum possible, considering the number of eligible teams (.500 record or better) usually hovers just over 70.

BCS National Championship Game
Monday, Jan. 7 · Miami Gardens, Fla.
BCS #1 vs. BCS #2

Rose Bowl
Tuesday, Jan. 1
Pasadena, Calif.
Big Ten #1 vs. Pac-12 #1

Orange Bowl
Tuesday, Jan. 1
Miami Gardens, Fla.
ACC #1 vs. BCS at-large

Sugar Bowl
Wednesday, Jan. 2
New Orleans, La.
SEC #1 vs. BCS at-large

Fiesta Bowl
Thursday, Jan. 3
Glendale, Ariz.
Big 12 #1 vs. BCS at-large

NEW MEXICO
Saturday, Dec. 15 · ESPN
Albuquerque, N.M.
Pac-12 No. 7 vs. MW No. 4-5

FAMOUS IDAHO POTATO
Saturday, Dec. 15 · ESPN
Boise, Idaho
WAC champ vs. MAC No. 3

POINSETTIA
Thursday, Dec. 20 · ESPN
San Diego, Calif.
BYU (if qualified) vs. MW No. 2

BEEF 'O' BRADY'S
Friday, Dec. 21, · ESPN
St. Petersburg, Fla.
C-USA No. 2-6 vs. Big East No. 6

NEW ORLEANS
Saturday, Dec. 22 · ESPN
New Orleans, La.
C-USA No. 2-6 vs. Sun Belt

MAACO BOWL LAS VEGAS
Saturday, Dec. 22 · ESPN
Las Vegas, Nev.
Pac-12 No. 5 vs. MW champ

HAWAII
Monday, Dec. 24 · ESPN
Honolulu, Hawaii
MW No. 4-5 vs. C-USA No. 2-6

LITTLE CAESAR'S PIZZA
Wednesday, Dec. 26 · ESPN
Detroit, Mich.
Big Ten No. 8 vs. MAC No. 2

MILITARY
Thursday, Dec. 27 · ESPN
Washington, D.C.
ACC No. 8 vs. Army (if qualified)

BELK
Thursday, Dec. 27 · ESPN
Charlotte, N.C.
ACC No. 5 vs. Big East No. 3

HOLIDAY
Thursday, Dec. 27 · ESPN
San Diego, Calif.
Pac-12 No. 3 vs. Big 12 No. 5

CHAMPS SPORTS
TBD · ESPN
Orlando, Fla.
Big East No. 2/Notre Dame vs. ACC No. 3

INDEPENDENCE
Friday, Dec. 28 · ESPN2
Shreveport, La.
ACC No. 7 vs. MW No. 3

MEINEKE CAR CARE BOWL OF TEXAS
Friday, Dec. 28 · ESPN
Houston, Texas
Big 12 No. 6 vs. Big Ten No. 6

ARMED FORCES
Saturday, Dec. 29 · ESPN
Fort Worth, Texas
TBD vs. C-USA No. 2-6

KRAFT FIGHT HUNGER
Saturday, Dec. 29 · ESPN
San Francisco, Calif.
Pac-12 No. 6 vs. Navy

ALAMO
Saturday, Dec. 29 · ESPN
San Antonio, Texas
Pac-12 No. 2 vs. Big 12 No. 3

PINSTRIPE
TBD · ESPN
Bronx, N.Y.
Big 12 No. 7 vs. Big East No. 4

MUSIC CITY
Monday, Dec. 31 · ESPN
Nashville, Tenn.
SEC No. 7 vs. ACC No. 6

INSIGHT
TBD · ESPN
Tempe, Ariz.
Big 12 No. 4 vs. Big Ten No. 4-5

SUN
TBD · CBS
El Paso, Texas
ACC No. 4 vs. Pac-12 No. 4

LIBERTY
Saturday, Dec. 31 · ESPN
Memphis, Tenn.
C-USA champ vs. Big East No. 5/SEC No. 8-9

CHICK-FIL-A
Monday, Dec. 31 · ESPN
Atlanta, Ga.
ACC No. 2 vs. SEC No. 5

TICKETCITY
Tuesday, Jan. 1 · ESPNU
Dallas, Texas
C-USA No. 2-6 vs. Big Ten No. 7

CAPITAL ONE
TBD · ESPN
Orlando, Fla.
SEC No. 2 vs. Big Ten No. 2

OUTBACK BOWL
Tuesday, Jan. 1 · ABC
Tampa, Fla.
Big Ten No. 3 vs. SEC No. 3

GATOR
Tuesday, Jan. 1 · ESPN2
Jacksonville, Fla.
Big Ten No. 4-5 vs. SEC No. 6

COTTON
Friday, Jan. 4 · FOX
Arlington, Texas
Big 12 No. 2 vs. SEC No. 3-4

BBVA COMPASS
Saturday, Jan. 5 · ESPN
Birmingham, Ala.
SEC No. 8-9 vs. Big East No. 5

GoDADDY.com
Sunday, Jan. 6 · ESPN
Mobile, Ala.
Sun Belt No. 2 vs. MAC champ

Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 1 MIAMI
Sept. 8 MAINE
Sept. 15 at Northwestern
Sept. 29 CLEMSON
Oct. 6 at Army
Oct. 13 at Florida State
Oct. 20 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 27 MARYLAND
Nov. 3 at Wake Forest
Nov. 10 NOTRE DAME
Nov. 17 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 24 at NC State

CLEMSON
Sept. 1 vs. Auburn (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 8 BALL STATE
Sept. 15 FURMAN
Sept. 22 at Florida State
Sept. 29 at Boston College
Oct. 6 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 20 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 25 at Wake Forest
Nov. 3 at Duke
Nov. 10 MARYLAND
Nov. 17 NC STATE
Nov. 24 SOUTH CAROLINA

DUKE
Sept. 1 FIU
Sept. 8 at Stanford
Sept. 15 N.C. CENTRAL
Sept. 22 MEMPHIS
Sept. 29 at Wake Forest
Oct. 6 VIRGINIA
Oct. 13 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 20 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 27 at Florida State
Nov. 3 CLEMSON
Nov. 17 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 24 MIAMI

FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 1 MURRAY STATE
Sept. 8 SAVANNAH STATE
Sept. 15 WAKE FOREST
Sept. 22 CLEMSON
Sept. 29 at South Florida
Oct. 6 at NC State
Oct. 13 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 20 at Miami
Oct. 27 DUKE
Nov. 8 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 17 at Maryland
Nov. 24 FLORIDA

GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 3 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 8 PRESBYTERIAN
Sept. 15 VIRGINIA
Sept. 22 MIAMI
Sept. 29 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 6 at Clemson
Oct. 20 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 27 BYU
Nov. 3 at Maryland
Nov. 10 at North Carolina
Nov. 17 DUKE
Nov. 24 at Georgia

MARYLAND
Sept. 1 WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 8 at Temple
Sept. 15 CONNECTICUT
Sept. 22 at West Virginia
Oct. 6 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 13 at Virginia
Oct. 20 NC STATE
Oct. 27 at Boston College
Nov. 3 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 10 at Clemson
Nov. 17 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 24 at North Carolina

MIAMI
Sept. 1 at Boston College
Sept. 8 at Kansas State
Sept. 15 BETHUNE-COOKMAN
Sept. 22 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 29 NC STATE
Oct. 6 vs. Notre Dame (Chicago)
Oct. 13 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 20 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 1 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 10 at Virginia
Nov. 17 SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 24 at Duke

NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 1 ELON
Sept. 8 at Wake Forest
Sept. 15 at Louisville
Sept. 22 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 29 IDAHO
Oct. 6 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 13 at Miami
Oct. 20 at Duke
Oct. 27 NC STATE
Nov. 10 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 15 at Virginia
Nov. 24 MARYLAND

NC STATE
Aug. 31 vs. Tennessee (Atlanta)
Sept. 8 at Connecticut
Sept. 15 SOUTH ALABAMA
Sept. 22 THE CITADEL
Sept. 29 at Miami
Oct. 6 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 20 at Maryland
Oct. 27 at North Carolina
Nov. 3 VIRGINIA
Nov. 10 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 17 at Clemson
Nov. 24 BOSTON COLLEGE

VIRGINIA
Sept. 1 RICHMOND
Sept. 8 PENN STATE
Sept. 15 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 22 at TCU
Sept. 29 LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 6 at Duke
Oct. 13 MARYLAND
Oct. 20 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 3 at NC State
Nov. 10 MIAMI
Nov. 15 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 24 at Virginia Tech

VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 3 GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 8 AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 15 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 22 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 29 vs. Cincinnati (Landover, MD)
Oct. 6 at North Carolina
Oct. 13 DUKE
Oct. 20 at Clemson
Nov. 1 at Miami
Nov. 8 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 17 at Boston College
Nov. 24 VIRGINIA

WAKE FOREST
Sept. 1 LIBERTY
Sept. 8 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 15 at Florida State
Sept. 22 ARMY
Sept. 29 DUKE
Oct. 6 at Maryland
Oct. 20 at Virginia
Oct. 25 CLEMSON
Nov. 3 BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 10 at NC State
Nov. 17 at Notre Dame
Nov. 24 VANDERBILT

BIG EAST

CINCINNATI
Sept. 6 PITTSBURGH
Sept. 15 DELAWARE STATE
Sept. 29 vs. Virginia Tech (Landover, MD)
Oct. 6 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 13 FORDHAM
Oct. 20 at Toledo
Oct. 26 at Louisville
Nov. 3 SYRACUSE
Nov. 10 at Temple
Nov. 17 RUTGERS
Nov. 23 SOUTH FLORIDA
Dec. 1 at Connecticut

CONNECTICUT
Aug. 30 MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 8 NC STATE
Sept. 15 at Maryland
Sept. 22 at Western Michigan
Sept. 29 BUFFALO
Oct. 6 at Rutgers
Oct. 13 TEMPLE
Oct. 19 at Syracuse
Nov. 3 at South Florida
Nov. 9 PITTSBURGH
Nov. 24 at Louisville
Dec. 1 CINCINNATI

LOUISVILLE
Sept. 2 KENTUCKY
Sept. 8 MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 15 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 22 at FIU
Sept. 29 at Southern Miss
Oct. 13 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 20 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 26 CINCINNATI
Nov. 3 TEMPLE
Nov. 10 at Syracuse
Nov. 24 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 29 at Rutgers

PITTSBURGH
Sept. 1 YOUNGSTOWN STATE
Sept. 6 at Cincinnati
Sept. 15 VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 22 at Gardner-Webb
Oct. 5 at Syracuse
Oct. 13 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 20 at Buffalo
Oct. 27 TEMPLE
Nov. 3 at Notre Dame
Nov. 9 at Connecticut
Nov. 24 RUTGERS
Dec. 1 at South Florida

RUTGERS
Sept. 1 at Tulane
Sept. 8 HOWARD
Sept. 13 at South Florida
Sept. 22 at Arkansas
Oct. 6 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 13 SYRACUSE
Oct. 20 at Temple
Oct. 27 KENT STATE
Nov. 10 ARMY
Nov. 17 at Cincinnati
Nov. 24 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 29 LOUISVILLE

SYRACUSE
Sept. 1 NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 8 vs. USC (East Rutherford, N.J.)
Sept. 15 STONY BROOK
Sept. 22 at Minnesota
Oct. 5 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 13 at Rutgers
Oct. 19 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 27 at South Florida
Nov. 3 at Cincinnati
Nov. 10 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 17 at Missouri
Nov. 23 at Temple

TEMPLE
Aug. 31 VILLANOVA
Sept. 8 MARYLAND
Sept. 22 at Penn State
Oct. 6 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 13 at Connecticut
Oct. 20 RUTGERS
Oct. 27 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 3 at Louisville
Nov. 10 CINCINNATI
Nov. 17 at Army
Nov. 23 SYRACUSE

SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 1 CHATTANOOGA
Sept. 8 at Nevada
Sept. 13 RUTGERS
Sept. 22 at Ball State
Sept. 29 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 6 at Temple
Oct. 20 at Louisville
Oct. 27 SYRACUSE
Nov. 3 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 17 at Miami
Nov. 23 at Cincinnati
Dec. 1 PITTSBURGH

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS
Sept. 1 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8 at Arizona State
Sept. 15 CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 22 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 29 PENN STATE
Oct. 6 at Wisconsin
Oct. 13 at Michigan
Oct. 27 INDIANA
Nov. 3 at Ohio State
Nov. 10 MINNESOTA
Nov. 17 PURDUE
Nov. 24 at Northwestern

INDIANA
Sept. 1 INDIANA STATE
Sept. 8 vs. Massachusetts (Boston)
Sept. 15 BALL STATE
Sept. 29 at Northwestern
Oct. 6 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 13 OHIO STATE
Oct. 20 at Navy
Oct. 27 at Illinois
Nov. 3 IOWA
Nov. 10 WISCONSIN
Nov. 17 at Penn State
Nov. 24 at Purdue

IOWA
Sept. 1 vs. Northern Illinois (Chicago)
Sept. 8 IOWA STATE
Sept. 15 NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 22 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 29 MINNESOTA
Oct. 13 at Michigan State
Oct. 20 PENN STATE
Oct. 27 at Northwestern
Nov. 3 at Indiana
Nov. 10 PURDUE
Nov. 17 at Michigan
Nov. 23 NEBRASKA

MICHIGAN
Sep. 1 vs. Alabama (Arlington, TX)
Sep. 8 AIR FORCE
Sep. 15 MASSACHUSETTS
Sep. 22 at Notre Dame
Oct. 6 at Purdue
Oct. 13 ILLINOIS
Oct. 20 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 27 at Nebraska
Nov. 3 at Minnesota
Nov. 10 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 17 IOWA
Nov. 24 at Ohio State

MICHIGAN STATE
Aug. 31 BOISE STATE
Sept. 8 at Central Michigan
Sept. 15 NOTRE DAME
Sept. 22 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 29 OHIO STATE
Oct. 6 at Indiana
Oct. 13 IOWA
Oct. 20 at Michigan
Oct. 27 at Wisconsin
Nov. 3 NEBRASKA
Nov. 17 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 24 at Minnesota

MINNESOTA
Aug. 30 at UNLV
Sept. 8 NEW HAMPSHIRE
Sept. 15 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 22 SYRACUSE
Sept. 29 at Iowa
Oct. 13 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 20 at Wisconsin
Oct. 27 PURDUE
Nov. 3 MICHIGAN
Nov. 10 at Illinois
Nov. 17 at Nebraska
Nov. 24 MICHIGAN STATE

NEBRASKA
Sept. 1 SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 8 at UCLA
Sept. 15 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 22 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 29 WISCONSIN
Oct 6 at Ohio State
Oct 20 at Northwestern
Oct 27 MICHIGAN
Nov 3 at Michigan State
Nov 10 PENN STATE
Nov 17 MINNESOTA
Nov 23 at Iowa

NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 1 at Syracuse
Sept. 8 VANDERBILT
Sept. 15 BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 22 SOUTH DAKOTA
Sept. 29 INDIANA
Oct. 6 at Penn State
Oct. 13 at Minnesota
Oct. 20 NEBRASKA
Oct. 27 IOWA
Nov. 10 at Michigan
Nov. 17 at Michigan State
Nov. 24 ILLINOIS

OHIO STATE
Sept. 1 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 8 UCF
Sept. 15 CALIFORNIA
Sept. 22 UAB
Sept. 29 at Michigan State
Oct 6 NEBRASKA
Oct 13 at Indiana
Oct 20 PURDUE
Oct 27 at Penn State
Nov 3 ILLINOIS
Nov 17 at Wisconsin
Nov 24 MICHIGAN

PENN STATE
Sept. 1 OHIO
Sept. 8 at Virginia
Sept. 15 NAVY
Sept. 22 TEMPLE
Sept. 29 at Illinois
Oct. 6 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 20 at Iowa
Oct. 27 OHIO STATE
Nov. 3 at Purdue
Nov. 10 at Nebraska
Nov. 17 INDIANA
Nov. 24 WISCONSIN

PURDUE
Sept. 1 EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 8 at Notre Dame
Sept. 15 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 29 MARSHALL
Oct. 6 MICHIGAN
Oct. 13 WISCONSIN
Oct. 20 at Ohio State
Oct. 27 at Minnesota
Nov. 3 PENN STATE
Nov. 10 at Iowa
Nov. 17 at Illinois
Nov. 24 INDIANA

WISCONSIN
Sept. 1 NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 8 at Oregon State
Sept. 15 UTAH STATE
Sept. 22 UTEP
Sept. 29 at Nebraska
Oct. 6 ILLINOIS
Oct. 13 at Purdue
Oct. 20 MINNESOTA
Oct. 27 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 10 at Indiana
Nov. 17 OHIO STATE
Nov. 24 at Penn State

BIG 12

BAYLOR
Sept. 2 SMU
Sept. 15 SAM HOUSTON STATE
Sept. 22 at ULM
Sept. 29 at West Virginia
Oct. 13 TCU
Oct. 20 at Texas
Oct. 27 at Iowa State
Nov. 3 KANSAS
Nov. 10 at Oklahoma
Nov. 17 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 24 vs. Texas Tech (Arlington, TX)
Dec. 1 OKLAHOMA STATE

IOWA STATE
Sept. 1 TULSA
Sept. 8 at Iowa
Sept. 15 WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 29 TEXAS TECH
Oct 6 at TCU
Oct 13 KANSAS STATE
Oct 20 at Oklahoma State
Oct 27 BAYLOR
Nov 3 OKLAHOMA
Nov 10 at Texas
Nov 17 at Kansas
Nov 24 WEST VIRGINIA

KANSAS
Sept. 1 SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 8 RICE
Sept. 15 TCU
Sept. 22 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 6 at Kansas State
Oct. 13 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 20 at Oklahoma
Oct. 27 TEXAS
Nov. 3 at Baylor
Nov. 10 at Texas Tech
Nov. 17 IOWA STATE
Dec. 1 at West Virginia

KANSAS STATE
Sept. 1 MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 8 MIAMI
Sept. 15 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 22 at Oklahoma
Oct. 6 KANSAS
Oct. 13 at Iowa State
Oct. 20 at West Virginia
Oct. 27 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 3 OKLAHOMA STATE
Nov. 10 at TCU
Nov. 17 at Baylor
Dec. 1 TEXAS

OKLAHOMA
Sept. 1 at UTEP
Sept. 8 FLORIDA A&M
Sept. 22 KANSAS STATE
Oct. 6 at Texas Tech
Oct. 13 vs. Texas (Dallas)
Oct. 20 KANSAS
Oct. 27 NOTRE DAME
Nov. 3 at Iowa State
Nov. 10 BAYLOR
Nov. 17 at West Virginia
Nov. 24 OKLAHOMA STATE
Dec. 1 at TCU

OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 1 SAVANNAH STATE
Sept. 8 at Arizona
Sept. 15 LOUISIANA
Sept. 29 TEXAS
Oct. 13 at Kansas
Oct. 20 IOWA STATE
Oct. 27 TCU
Nov. 3 at Kansas State
Nov. 10 WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 17 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 24 at Oklahoma
Dec. 1 at Baylor

TCU
Sept. 8 GRAMBLING STATE
Sept. 15 at Kansas
Sept. 22 VIRGINIA
Sept. 29 at SMU
Oct. 6 IOWA STATE
Oct. 13 at Baylor
Oct. 20 TEXAS TECH
Oct. 27 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 3 at West Virginia
Nov. 10 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 24 at Texas
Dec. 1 OKLAHOMA

TEXAS
Sept. 1 WYOMING
Sept. 8 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 15 at Ole Miss
Sept. 29 at Oklahoma State
Oct. 6 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 13 vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)
Oct. 20 BAYLOR
Oct. 27 at Kansas
Nov. 3 at Texas Tech
Nov. 10 IOWA STATE
Nov. 24 TCU
Dec. 1 at Kansas State

Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

TEXAS TECH

Sept. 1	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 8	at Texas State
Sept. 15	NEW MEXICO
Sept. 29	at Iowa State
Oct. 6	OKLAHOMA
Oct. 13	WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 20	at TCU
Oct. 27	at Kansas State
Nov. 3	TEXAS
Nov. 10	KANSAS
Nov. 17	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 24	vs. Baylor (Arlington, TX)

WEST VIRGINIA

Sept. 1	MARSHALL
Sept. 15	JAMES MADISON
Sept. 22	MARYLAND
Sept. 29	BAYLOR
Oct. 6	at Texas
Oct. 13	at Texas Tech
Oct. 20	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 3	TCU
Nov. 10	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 17	OKLAHOMA
Nov. 24	at Iowa State
Dec. 1	KANSAS

C-USA

EAST CAROLINA

Sept. 1	APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 8	at South Carolina
Sept. 15	at Southern Miss
Sept. 22	at North Carolina
Sept. 29	UTEP
Oct. 6	at UCF
Oct. 13	MEMPHIS
Oct. 20	at UAB
Oct. 27	NAVY
Nov. 3	HOUSTON
Nov. 17	at Tulane
Nov. 24	MARSHALL

HOUSTON

Sept. 1	TEXAS STATE
Sept. 8	LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 15	at UCLA
Sept. 29	vs. Rice (Reliant Stadium)
Oct. 6	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13	UAB
Oct. 20	at SMU
Oct. 27	UTEP
Nov. 3	at East Carolina
Nov. 10	TULSA
Nov. 17	at Marshall
Nov. 24	TULANE

MARSHALL

Sept. 1	at West Virginia
Sept. 8	WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 15	OHIO
Sept. 22	at Rice
Sept. 29	at Purdue
Oct. 6	TULSA
Oct. 20	at Southern Miss
Oct. 27	UCF
Nov. 3	MEMPHIS
Nov. 10	at UAB
Nov. 17	HOUSTON
Nov. 24	at East Carolina

MEMPHIS

Sept. 1	TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 8	at Arkansas State
Sept. 15	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 22	at Duke
Oct. 6	RICE
Oct. 13	at East Carolina
Oct. 20	UCF
Oct. 27	at SMU
Nov. 3	at Marshall
Nov. 10	TULANE
Nov. 17	at UAB
Nov. 24	SOUTHERN MISS

RICE

Aug. 30	UCLA
Sept. 8	at Kansas
Sept. 15	at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 22	MARSHALL
Sept. 29	vs. Houston (Reliant Stadium)
Oct. 6	at Memphis
Oct. 13	UTSA
Oct. 20	at Tulsa
Oct. 27	SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 3	at Tulane
Nov. 17	SMU
Nov. 24	at UTEP

SMU

Sept. 2	at Baylor
Sept. 8	STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 15	TEXAS A&M
Sept. 29	TCU
Oct. 6	at UTEP
Oct. 13	at Tulane
Oct. 20	HOUSTON
Oct. 27	MEMPHIS
Nov. 3	at UCF
Nov. 10	SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 17	at Rice
Nov. 24	TULSA

SOUTHERN MISS

Sept. 1	at Nebraska
Sept. 15	EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 22	at Western Kentucky
Sept. 29	LOUISVILLE
Oct. 6	BOISE STATE
Oct. 13	at UCF
Oct. 20	MARSHALL
Oct. 27	at Rice
Nov. 3	UAB
Nov. 10	at SMU
Nov. 17	UTEP
Nov. 24	at Memphis

TULANE

Sept. 1	RUTGERS
Sept. 8	at Tulsa
Sept. 22	OLE MISS
Sept. 29	ULM
Oct. 6	at Louisiana
Oct. 13	SMU
Oct. 20	at UTEP
Oct. 27	UAB
Nov. 3	RICE
Nov. 10	at Memphis
Nov. 17	EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 24	at Houston

TULSA

Sept. 1	at Iowa State
Sept. 8	TULANE
Sept. 15	NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 22	FRESNO STATE
Sept. 29	at UAB
Oct. 6	at Marshall
Oct. 13	UTEP
Oct. 20	RICE
Nov. 3	at Arkansas
Nov. 10	at Houston
Nov. 17	UCF
Nov. 24	at SMU

UAB

Sept. 1	TROY
Sept. 15	at South Carolina
Sept. 22	at Ohio State
Sept. 29	TULSA
Oct. 6	S.E. LOUISIANA
Oct. 13	at Houston
Oct. 20	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 27	at Tulane
Nov. 3	at Southern Miss
Nov. 10	MARSHALL
Nov. 17	MEMPHIS
Nov. 24	at UCF

UCF

Aug. 30	at Akron
Sept. 8	at Ohio State
Sept. 15	FIU
Sept. 29	MISSOURI
Oct. 6	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 13	SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 20	at Memphis
Oct. 27	at Marshall
Nov. 3	SMU
Nov. 10	at UTEP
Nov. 17	at Tulsa
Nov. 24	UAB

UTEP

Sept. 1	OKLAHOMA
Sept. 8	at Ole Miss
Sept. 15	NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 22	at Wisconsin
Sept. 29	at East Carolina
Oct. 6	SMU
Oct. 13	at Tulsa
Oct. 20	TULANE
Oct. 27	at Houston
Nov. 10	UCF
Nov. 17	at Southern Miss
Nov. 24	RICE

I-A INDEPENDENTS

ARMY

Sept. 8	at San Diego State
Sept. 15	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 22	at Wake Forest
Sept. 29	STONY BROOK
Oct. 6	BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 13	KENT STATE
Oct. 20	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 27	BALL STATE
Nov. 3	AIR FORCE
Nov. 10	at Rutgers
Nov. 17	TEMPLE
Dec. 8	vs. Navy (Philadelphia, PA)

BYU

Sept. 1	WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 8	WEBER STATE
Sept. 15	at Utah
Sept. 22	at Boise State
Sept. 29	HAWAII
Oct. 5	UTAH STATE
Oct. 13	OREGON STATE
Oct. 20	at Notre Dame
Oct. 27	at Georgia Tech
Nov. 10	IDAHO
Nov. 17	at San Jose State
Nov. 24	at New Mexico State

NAVY

Sept. 1	vs. Notre Dame (Dublin, Ireland)
Sept. 15	at Penn State
Sept. 22	VMI
Sept. 29	SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 6	at Air Force
Oct. 13	at Central Michigan
Oct. 20	INDIANA
Oct. 27	at East Carolina
Nov. 3	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 10	at Troy
Nov. 17	TEXAS STATE
Dec. 8	vs. Army (Philadelphia, PA)

NOTRE DAME

Sept. 1	vs. Navy (Dublin, Ireland)
Sept. 8	PURDUE
Sept. 15	at Michigan State
Sept. 22	MICHIGAN
Oct. 6	vs. Miami (Chicago)
Oct. 13	STANFORD
Oct. 20	BYU
Oct. 27	at Oklahoma
Nov. 3	PITTSBURGH
Nov. 10	at Boston College
Nov. 17	WAKE FOREST
Nov. 24	at USC

MAC

AKRON

Aug. 30	UCF
Sept. 8	at FIU
Sept. 15	MORGAN STATE
Sept. 22	at Tennessee
Sept. 29	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 6	BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 13	at Ohio
Oct. 20	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 27	at Central Michigan
Nov. 3	at Kent State
Nov. 10	MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 20	at Toledo

BALL STATE

Aug. 30	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8	at Clemson
Sept. 15	at Indiana
Sept. 22	SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 29	at Kent State
Oct. 6	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 13	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 20	at Central Michigan
Oct. 27	at Army
Nov. 6	at Toledo
Nov. 14	OHIO
Nov. 23	at Miami (OH)

BOWLING GREEN

Sept. 1	at Florida
Sept. 8	IDAHO
Sept. 15	at Toledo
Sept. 22	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 29	RHODE ISLAND
Oct. 6	at Akron
Oct. 13	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 20	at Massachusetts
Oct. 27	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7	at Ohio
Nov. 17	KENT STATE
Nov. 23	vs. Buffalo (Columbus, OH)

BUFFALO

Sept. 1	at Georgia
Sept. 8	MORGAN STATE
Sept. 19/20	KENT STATE
Sept. 29	at Connecticut
Oct. 6	at Ohio
Oct. 13	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 20	PITTSBURGH
Oct. 27	TOLEDO
Nov. 3	MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 10	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 17	at Massachusetts
Nov. 23	vs. Bowling Green (Columbus, OH)

CENTRAL MICHIGAN

Aug. 30	SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 8	MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 22	at Iowa
Sept. 29	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 6	at Toledo
Oct. 13	NAVY
Oct. 20	BALL STATE
Oct. 27	AKRON
Nov. 3	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 10	at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 17	MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 23	at Massachusetts

EASTERN MICHIGAN

Aug. 30	at Ball State
Sept. 8	ILLINOIS STATE
Sept. 15	at Purdue
Sept. 22	at Michigan State
Oct. 6	KENT STATE
Oct. 13	TOLEDO
Oct. 20	ARMY
Oct. 27	at Bowling Green
Nov. 1	at Ohio
Nov. 10	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 17	at Western Michigan
Nov. 23	NORTHERN ILLINOIS

KENT STATE

Aug. 30	Towson
Sept. 8	at Kentucky
Sept. 19/20	at Buffalo
Sept. 29	BALL STATE
Oct. 6	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 13	at Army
Oct. 20	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 27	at Rutgers
Nov. 3	AKRON
Nov. 10	at Miami (OH)
Nov. 17	at Bowling Green
Nov. 23	OHIO

MASSACHUSETTS

Aug. 30	at Connecticut
Sept. 8	vs. Indiana (Boston)
Sept. 15	at Michigan
Sept. 22	at Miami (OH)
Sept. 29	OHIO
Oct. 6	at Western Michigan
Oct. 20	BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 27	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 3	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 10	at Akron
Nov. 17	BUFFALO
Nov. 23	CENTRAL MICHIGAN

MIAMI (OH)

Sept. 1	at Ohio State
Sept. 8	SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15	at Boise State
Sept. 22	MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 29	at Akron
Oct. 6	at Cincinnati
Oct. 13	at Bowling Green
Oct. 27	OHIO
Nov. 3	at Buffalo
Nov. 10	KENT STATE
Nov. 17	at Central Michigan
Nov. 23	BALL STATE

NORTHERN ILLINOIS

Sept. 1	vs. Iowa (Chicago)
Sept. 8	TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 15	at Army
Sept. 22	KANSAS
Sept. 29	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 6	at Ball State
Oct. 13	BUFFALO
Oct. 20	at Akron
Oct. 27	at Western Michigan
Nov. 3	MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 14	TOLEDO
Nov. 23	at Eastern Michigan

OHIO

Sept. 1	at Penn State
Sept. 8	NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 15	at Marshall
Sept. 22	NORFOLK STATE
Sept. 29	at Massachusetts
Oct. 6	BUFFALO
Oct. 13	AKRON
Oct. 27	at Miami (OH)
Nov. 1	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7	BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 14	at Ball State
Nov. 23	at Kent State

TOLEDO

Sept. 1	at Arizona
Sept. 8	at Wyoming
Sept. 15	BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 22	COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 29	at Western Michigan
Oct. 6	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 13	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 20	CINCINNATI
Oct. 27	at Buffalo
Nov. 6	BALL STATE
Nov. 14	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 20	AKRON

WESTERN MICHIGAN

Sept. 1	at Illinois
Sept. 8	EASTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15	at Minnesota
Sept. 22	CONNECTICUT
Sept. 29	TOLEDO
Oct. 6	MASSACHUSETTS
Oct. 13	at Ball State
Oct. 20	at Kent State
Oct. 27	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Nov. 3	at Central Michigan
Nov. 10	at Buffalo
Nov. 17	EASTERN MICHIGAN

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE

Sept. 1	IDAHO STATE
Sept. 8	at Michigan
Sept. 22	at UNLV
Sept. 29	COLORADO STATE
Oct. 6	NAVY
Oct. 13	at Wyoming
Oct. 20	NEW MEXICO
Oct. 27	NEVADA
Nov. 3	at Army
Nov. 10	at San Diego State
Nov. 17	HAWAII
Nov. 24	at Fresno State

BOISE STATE

Aug. 31	at Michigan State
Sept. 15	MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 22	BYU
Sept. 29	at New Mexico
Oct. 6	at Southern Miss
Oct. 13	FRESNO STATE
Oct. 20	UNLV
Oct. 27	at Wyoming
Nov. 3	SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 10	at Hawaii
Nov. 17	COLORADO STATE
Nov. 24	at Nevada

COLORADO STATE

Sept. 2	vs. Colorado (Denver)
Sept. 8	NORTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 15	at San Jose State
Sept. 22	UTAH STATE
Sept. 29	at Air Force
Oct. 6	FRESNO STATE
Oct. 13	at San Diego State
Oct. 27	HAWAII
Nov. 3	at Wyoming
Nov. 10	UNLV
Nov. 17	at Boise State
Nov. 24	NEW MEXICO

FRESNO STATE

Sept. 1	WEBER STATE
Sept. 8	at Oregon
Sept. 15	COLORADO
Sept. 22	at Tulsa
Sept. 29	SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 6	at Colorado State
Oct. 13	at Boise State
Oct. 20	WYOMING
Oct. 27	at New Mexico
Nov. 3	HAWAII
Nov. 10	at Nevada
Nov. 24	AIR FORCE

HAWAII

Sept. 1	at USC
Sept. 15	LAMAR
Sept. 22	NEVADA
Sept. 29	at BYU
Oct. 6	at San Diego State
Oct. 13	NEW MEXICO
Oct. 27	at Colorado State
Nov. 3	at Fresno State
Nov. 10	BOISE STATE
Nov. 17	at Air Force
Nov. 24	UNLV
Dec. 1	SOUTH ALABAMA

NEVADA

Sept. 1	at California
Sept. 8	SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 15	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 22	at Hawaii
Sept. 29	at Texas State
Oct. 6	WYOMING
Oct. 13	at UNLV
Oct. 20	SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 27	at Air Force
Nov. 10	FRESNO STATE
Nov. 17	at New Mexico
Nov. 24	BOISE STATE

NEW MEXICO

Sept. 1	SOUTHERN
Sept. 8	at Texas
Sept. 15	at Texas Tech
Sept. 22	at New Mexico State
Sept. 29	BOISE STATE
Oct. 6	TEXAS STATE
Oct. 13	at Hawaii
Oct. 20	at Air Force
Oct. 27	FRESNO STATE
Nov. 3	at UNLV
Nov. 10	WYOMING
Nov. 17	NEVADA
Nov. 24	at Colorado State

SAN DIEGO STATE

Sept. 1	at Washington
Sept. 8	ARMY
Sept. 15	NORTH DAKOTA
Sept. 22	SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 29	at Fresno State
Oct. 6	HAWAII
Oct. 13	COLORADO STATE
Oct. 20	at Nevada
Oct. 27	UNLV
Nov. 3	at Boise State
Nov. 10	AIR FORCE
Nov. 24	at Wyoming

UNLV

Aug. 30	MINNESOTA
Sept. 8	NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 15	WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 22	AIR FORCE
Sept. 29	at Utah State
Oct. 6	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 13	NEVADA
Oct. 20	at Boise State
Oct. 27	at San Diego State
Nov. 3	NEW MEXICO
Nov. 10	at Colorado State
Nov. 17	WYOMING
Nov. 24	at Hawaii

WYOMING

Sept. 1	at Texas
Sept. 8	TOLEDO
Sept. 15	CAL POLY
Sept. 22	at Idaho
Oct. 6	at Nevada
Oct. 13	AIR FORCE
Oct. 20	at Fresno State
Oct. 27	BOISE STATE
Nov. 3	COLORADO STATE
Nov. 10	at New Mexico
Nov. 17	at UNLV
Nov. 24	SAN DIEGO STATE

Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

PAC-12

ARIZONA
Sept. 1 TOLEDO
Sept. 8 OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 15 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 22 at Oregon
Sept. 29 OREGON STATE
Oct. 6 at Stanford
Oct. 20 WASHINGTON
Oct. 27 USC
Nov. 3 at UCLA
Nov. 10 COLORADO
Nov. 17 at Utah
Nov. 23 ARIZONA STATE

ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 1 NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 8 ILLINOIS
Sept. 15 at Missouri
Sept. 22 UTAH
Sept. 29 at California
Oct. 11 at Colorado
Oct. 18 OREGON
Oct. 27 UCLA
Nov. 3 at Oregon State
Nov. 10 at USC
Nov. 17 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 23 at Arizona

CALIFORNIA
Sept. 1 NEVADA
Sept. 8 SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 15 at Ohio State
Sept. 22 at USC
Sept. 29 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 6 UCLA
Oct. 13 at Washington State
Oct. 20 STANFORD
Oct. 27 at Utah
Nov. 2 WASHINGTON
Nov. 10 OREGON
Nov. 17 at Oregon State

COLORADO
Sept. 2 vs. Colorado State (Denver)
Sept. 8 SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 15 at Fresno State
Sept. 22 at Washington State
Sept. 29 UCLA
Oct 11 ARIZONA STATE
Oct 20 at USC
Oct 27 at Oregon
Nov 3 STANFORD
Nov 10 at Arizona
Nov 17 WASHINGTON
Nov 23 UTAH

OREGON
Sept. 1 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 8 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 15 TENNESSEE TECH
Sept. 22 ARIZONA
Sept. 29 vs. Washington St. (Seattle)
Oct 6 WASHINGTON
Oct 18 at Arizona State
Oct 27 COLORADO
Nov 3 at USC
Nov 10 at California
Nov 17 STANFORD
Nov 24 at Oregon State

OREGON STATE
Sept. 1 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 8 WISCONSIN
Sept. 22 at UCLA
Sept. 29 at Arizona
Oct. 6 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 13 at BYU
Oct. 20 UTAH
Oct. 27 at Washington
Nov. 3 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 10 at Stanford
Nov. 17 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 24 OREGON

STANFORD
Sept. 1 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 8 DUKE
Sept. 15 USC
Sept. 27 at Washington
Oct. 6 ARIZONA
Oct. 13 at Notre Dame
Oct. 20 at California
Oct. 27 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 3 at Colorado
Nov. 10 OREGON STATE
Nov. 17 at Oregon
Nov. 24 at UCLA

UCLA
Aug. 30 at Rice
Sept. 8 NEBRASKA
Sept. 15 HOUSTON
Sept. 22 OREGON STATE
Sept. 29 at Colorado
Oct. 6 at California
Oct. 13 UTAH
Oct. 27 at Arizona State
Nov. 3 ARIZONA
Nov. 10 at Washington State
Nov. 17 USC
Nov. 24 STANFORD

USC
Sept. 1 HAWAII
Sept. 8 vs. Syracuse (East Rutherford, N.J.)
Sept. 15 at Stanford
Sept. 22 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 4 at Utah
Oct. 13 at Washington
Oct. 20 COLORADO
Oct. 27 at Arizona
Nov. 3 OREGON
Nov. 10 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 17 at UCLA
Nov. 24 NOTRE DAME

UTAH
Aug. 30 NORTHERN COLORADO
Sept. 7 at Utah State
Sept. 15 BYU
Sept. 22 at Arizona State
Oct. 4 USC
Oct. 13 at UCLA
Oct. 20 at Oregon State
Oct. 27 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 3 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 10 at Washington
Nov. 17 ARIZONA
Nov. 23 at Colorado

WASHINGTON
Sept. 1 SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 8 at LSU
Sept. 15 PORTLAND STATE
Sept. 27 STANFORD
Oct. 6 at Oregon
Oct. 13 USC
Oct. 20 at Arizona
Oct. 27 OREGON STATE
Nov. 2 at California
Nov. 10 UTAH
Nov. 17 at Colorado
Nov. 23 at Washington State

WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 1 at BYU
Sept. 8 EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 15 at UNLV
Sept. 22 COLORADO
Sept. 29 vs. Oregon (Seattle)
Oct. 6 at Oregon State
Oct. 13 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 27 at Stanford
Nov. 3 at Utah
Nov. 10 UCLA
Nov. 17 at Arizona State
Nov. 23 WASHINGTON

SEC

ALABAMA
Sept. 1 vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 8 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 15 at Arkansas
Sept. 22 FAU
Sept. 29 OLE MISS
Oct. 13 at Missouri
Oct. 20 at Tennessee
Oct. 27 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 3 at LSU
Nov. 10 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 17 WESTERN CAROLINA
Nov. 24 AUBURN

ARKANSAS
Sept. 1 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 8 ULM
Sept. 15 ALABAMA
Sept. 22 RUTGERS
Sept. 29 at Texas A&M
Oct. 6 at Auburn
Oct. 13 KENTUCKY
Oct. 27 OLE MISS
Nov. 3 TULSA
Nov. 10 at South Carolina
Nov. 17 at Mississippi State
Nov. 24 LSU

AUBURN
Sept. 1 vs. Clemson (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 8 at Mississippi State
Sept. 15 ULM
Sept. 22 LSU
Oct. 6 ARKANSAS
Oct. 13 at Ole Miss
Oct. 20 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 27 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 3 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 10 GEORGIA
Nov. 17 ALABAMA A&M
Nov. 24 at Alabama

FLORIDA
Sept. 1 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 8 at Texas A&M
Sept. 15 at Tennessee
Sept. 22 KENTUCKY
Oct. 6 LSU
Oct. 13 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 20 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 27 vs.Georgia (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3 MISSOURI
Nov. 10 LOUISIANA
Nov. 17 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Nov. 24 at Florida State

GEORGIA
Sept. 1 BUFFALO
Sept. 8 at Missouri
Sept. 15 FAU
Sept. 22 VANDERBILT
Sept. 29 TENNESSEE
Oct. 6 at South Carolina
Oct. 20 at Kentucky
Oct. 27 vs. Florida (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3 OLE MISS
Nov. 10 at Auburn
Nov. 17 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Nov. 24 GEORGIA TECH

KENTUCKY
Sept. 2 at Louisville
Sept. 8 KENT STATE
Sept. 15 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 22 at Florida
Sept. 29 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 6 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 13 at Arkansas
Oct. 20 GEORGIA
Oct. 27 at Missouri
Nov. 3 VANDERBILT
Nov. 17 SAMFORD
Nov. 24 at Tennessee

LSU
Sept. 1 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 8 WASHINGTON
Sept. 15 IDAHO
Sept. 22 at Auburn
Sept. 29 TOWSON
Oct. 6 at Florida
Oct. 13 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 20 at Texas A&M
Nov. 3 ALABAMA
Nov. 10 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 17 OLE MISS
Nov. 24 at Arkansas

OLE MISS
Sept. 1 CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 8 UTEP
Sept. 15 TEXAS
Sept. 22 at Tulane
Sept. 29 at Alabama
Oct. 6 TEXAS A&M
Oct. 13 AUBURN
Oct. 27 at Arkansas
Nov. 3 at Georgia
Nov. 10 VANDERBILT
Nov. 17 at LSU
Nov. 24 MISSISSIPPI STATE

MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 1 JACKSON STATE
Sept. 8 AUBURN
Sept. 15 at Troy
Sept. 22 SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 6 at Kentucky
Oct. 13 TENNESSEE
Oct. 20 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 27 at Alabama
Nov. 3 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 10 at LSU
Nov. 17 ARKANSAS
Nov. 24 at Ole Miss

MISSOURI
Sept. 1 S.E. LOUISIANA
Sept. 8 GEORGIA
Sept. 15 ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 22 at South Carolina
Sept. 29 at UCF
Oct. 6 VANDERBILT
Oct. 13 ALABAMA
Oct. 27 KENTUCKY
Nov. 3 at Florida
Nov. 10 at Tennessee
Nov. 17 SYRACUSE
Nov. 24 at Texas A&M

SOUTH CAROLINA
Aug. 30 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 8 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 15 UAB
Sept. 22 MISSOURI
Sept. 29 at Kentucky
Oct. 6 GEORGIA
Oct. 13 at LSU
Oct. 20 at Florida
Oct. 27 TENNESSEE
Nov. 10 ARKANSAS
Nov. 17 WOFFORD
Nov. 24 at Clemson

TENNESSEE
Aug. 31 vs. NC State (Atlanta)
Sept. 8 GEORGIA STATE
Sept. 15 FLORIDA
Sept. 22 AKRON
Sept. 29 at Georgia
Oct. 13 at Mississippi State
Oct. 20 ALABAMA
Oct. 27 at South Carolina
Nov. 3 TROY
Nov. 10 MISSOURI
Nov. 17 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 24 KENTUCKY

TEXAS A&M
Aug. 30 at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 8 FLORIDA
Sept. 15 at SMU
Sept. 22 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 29 ARKANSAS
Oct. 6 at Ole Miss
Oct. 20 LSU
Oct. 27 at Auburn
Nov. 3 at Mississippi State
Nov. 10 at Alabama
Nov. 17 SAM HOUSTON STATE
Nov. 24 MISSOURI

VANDERBILT
Aug. 30 SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 8 at Northwestern
Sept. 15 PRESBYTERIAN
Sept. 22 at Georgia
Oct. 6 at Missouri
Oct. 13 FLORIDA
Oct. 20 AUBURN
Oct. 27 MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 3 at Kentucky
Nov. 10 at Ole Miss
Nov. 17 TENNESSEE
Nov. 24 at Wake Forest

SUN BELT

ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 1 at Oregon
Sept. 8 MEMPHIS
Sept. 15 at Nebraska
Sept. 22 ALCORN STATE
Sept. 29 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 4 at FIU
Oct. 13 SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 23 at Louisiana
Nov. 3 at North Texas
Nov. 8 ULM
Nov. 17 at Troy
Dec 1 MIDDLE TENNESSEE

FAU
Aug. 31 WAGNER
Sept. 8 at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 15 at Georgia
Sept. 22 at Alabama
Sept. 29 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13 at ULM
Oct. 20 at South Alabama
Oct. 27 TROY
Nov. 3 at Navy
Nov. 10 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 16 FIU
Dec. 1 LOUISIANA

FIU
Sept. 1 at Duke
Sept. 8 AKRON
Sept. 15 at UCF
Sept. 22 LOUISVILLE
Sept. 29 at Louisiana
Oct. 4 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 13 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 20 at Troy
Oct. 27 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 3 at South Alabama
Nov. 16 at FAU
Nov. 24 ULM

LOUISIANA
Sept. 1 LAMAR
Sept. 8 at Troy
Sept. 15 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 29 FIU
Oct. 6 TULANE
Oct. 16 at North Texas
Oct. 23 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 3 at ULM
Nov. 10 at Florida
Nov. 17 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 24 SOUTH ALABAMA
Dec. 1 at FAU

MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Aug. 30 McNEESE STATE
Sept. 8 FAU
Sept. 15 at Memphis
Sept. 29 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 6 ULM
Oct. 13 at FIU
Oct. 20 at Mississippi State
Oct. 27 NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 1 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 17 at South Alabama
Nov. 24 TROY
Dec 1 at Arkansas State

NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 1 at LSU
Sept. 8 TEXAS SOUTHERN
Sept. 15 at Kansas State
Sept. 22 TROY
Sept. 29 at FAU
Oct. 6 at Houston
Oct. 16 LOUISIANA
Oct. 27 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 3 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 10 SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 17 at ULM
Nov. 24 at Western Kentucky

SOUTH ALABAMA
Aug. 30 UTSA
Sept. 8 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 15 at NC State
Sept. 22 at Mississippi State
Sept. 29 TROY
Oct. 13 at Arkansas State
Oct. 20 FAU
Oct. 27 at ULM
Nov. 3 FIU
Nov. 10 at North Texas
Nov. 17 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 24 at Louisiana
Dec. 1 at Hawaii

TROY
Sept. 1 at UAB
Sept. 8 LOUISIANA
Sept. 15 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 22 at North Texas
Sept. 29 at South Alabama
Oct. 11 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 20 FIU
Oct. 27 at FAU
Nov. 3 at Tennessee
Nov. 10 NAVY
Nov. 17 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 24 at Middle Tennessee

ULM
Sept. 8 at Arkansas
Sept. 15 at Auburn
Sept. 22 BAYLOR
Sept. 29 at Tulane
Oct. 6 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 13 FAU
Oct. 20 at Western Kentucky
Oct. 27 SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 3 LOUISIANA
Nov. 8 at Arkansas State
Nov. 17 NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 24 at FIU

WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 1 AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 8 at Alabama
Sept. 15 at Kentucky
Sept. 22 SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 29 at Arkansas State
Oct. 11 at Troy
Oct. 20 ULM
Oct. 27 at FIU
Nov. 1 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 10 FAU
Nov. 17 at Louisiana
Nov. 24 NORTH TEXAS

WAC

IDAHO
Aug. 30 EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 8 at Bowling Green
Sept. 15 at LSU
Sept. 22 WYOMING
Sept. 29 at North Carolina
Oct. 6 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 13 at Texas State
Oct. 20 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 3 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 10 at BYU
Nov. 17 UTSA
Nov. 24 at Utah State

LOUISIANA TECH
Aug. 30 TEXAS A&M
Sept. 8 at Houston
Sept. 15 RICE
Sept. 22 at Illinois
Sept. 29 at Virginia
Oct. 6 UNLV
Oct. 20 IDAHO
Oct. 27 at New Mexico State
Nov. 3 UTSA
Nov. 10 at Texas State
Nov. 17 UTAH STATE
Nov. 24 at San Jose State

NEW MEXICO STATE
Aug. 30 SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 8 at Ohio
Sept. 15 at UTEP
Sept. 22 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 29 UTSA
Oct. 6 at Idaho
Oct. 20 at Utah State
Oct. 27 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 3 at Auburn
Nov. 10 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 24 BYU
Dec. 1 at Texas State

SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 1 at Stanford
Sept. 8 UC Davis
Sept. 15 COLORADO STATE
Sept. 22 at San Diego State
Sept. 29 at Navy
Oct. 13 UTAH STATE
Oct. 20 at UTSA
Oct. 27 TEXAS STATE
Nov. 3 at Idaho
Nov. 10 at New Mexico State
Nov. 17 BYU
Nov. 24 LOUISIANA TECH

TEXAS STATE
Sept. 1 at Houston
Sept. 8 TEXAS TECH
Sept. 22 STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 29 NEVADA
Oct. 6 at New Mexico
Oct. 13 IDAHO
Oct. 27 at San Jose State
Nov. 3 at Utah State
Nov. 10 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 17 at Navy
Nov. 24 at UTSA
Dec. 1 NEW MEXICO STATE

UTAH STATE
Aug. 30 SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 7 UTAH
Sept. 15 at Wisconsin
Sept. 22 at Colorado State
Sept. 29 UNLV
Oct. 5 at BYU
Oct. 13 at San Jose State
Oct. 20 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 27 at UTSA
Nov. 3 TEXAS STATE
Nov. 17 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 24 IDAHO

UTSA
Aug. 30 at South Alabama
Sept. 8 TEXAS A&M-COMMERCE
Sept. 15 at Georgia State
Sept. 22 N.W. OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 29 at New Mexico State
Oct. 13 at Rice
Oct. 20 SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 27 UTAH STATE
Nov. 3 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 10 McNEESE STATE
Nov. 17 at Idaho
Nov. 24 TEXAS STATE

2011 NCAA LEADERS

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

PASSING EFFICIENCY	GM	PATT	COMP	PCT	INT	YDS	TDS	EFFIC.
1. Russell Wilson, Wisconsin	14	309	225	72.82	4	3175	33	191.78
2. Robert Griffin III, Baylor	13	402	291	72.39	6	4293	37	189.48
3. Kellen Moore, Boise State	13	439	326	74.26	9	3800	43	175.19
4. Case Keenum, Houston	14	603	428	70.98	5	5631	48	174.03
5. Andrew Luck, Stanford	13	404	288	71.29	10	3517	37	169.69
6. Terrance Owens, Toledo	12	230	166	72.17	3	2022	18	169.24
7. Keith Price, Washington	13	362	242	66.85	11	3063	33	161.93
8. Matt Barkley, USC	12	446	308	69.06	7	3528	39	161.22
9. Brandon Weeden, Oklahoma State	13	564	408	72.34	13	4727	37	159.78
10. Bryn Renner, North Carolina	13	350	239	68.29	13	3086	26	159.44

INTERCEPTIONS	GM	INT	YDS	TDS	INT/GM
1. David Amerson, NC State	13	13	205	2	1.00
2. Bacarri Rambo, Georgia	13	8	157	1	.62
3. Phillip Thomas, Syracuse	10	6	50	0	.60
4. Casey Hayward, Vanderbilt	13	7	107	1	.54
4. Nigel Malone, Kansas State	13	7	92	1	.54
4. Larry Parker, San Diego State	13	7	57	0	.54
7. Bryce Callahan, Rice	12	6	25	0	.50
7. Donyae Coleman, New Mexico State	12	6	14	0	.50
9. Dexter McCoil, Tulsa	13	6	131	1	.46
9. Josh Bush, Wake Forest	13	6	115	0	.46

RUSHING	GM	ATT	YDS	TDS	AVG	AVG/G
1. LaMichael James, Oregon	12	247	1805	18	7.31	150.42
2. Bobby Rainey, Western Kentucky	12	369	1695	13	4.59	141.25
3. Montee Ball, Wisconsin	14	307	1923	33	6.26	137.36
4. Ronnie Hillman, San Diego State	13	311	1711	19	5.50	131.62
5. Trent Richardson, Alabama	13	283	1679	21	5.93	129.15
6. Bernard Pierce, Temple	12	273	1481	27	5.42	123.42
7. Zach Line, SMU	10	208	1224	17	5.88	122.40
8. David Wilson, Virginia Tech	14	290	1709	9	5.89	122.07
9. Robbie Rouse, Fresno State	13	329	1549	13	4.71	119.15
10. Terrance Ganaway, Baylor	13	250	1547	21	6.19	119.00

SCORING	GM	TDS	XP	XPA	FG	FGA	POINTS	PTPG
1. Montee Ball, Wisconsin	14	39	0	0	0	0	234	16.71
2. Bernard Pierce, Temple	12	27	0	0	0	0	162	13.50
3. Collin Klein, Kansas State	13	27	0	0	0	0	162	12.46
4. Joseph Randle, Oklahoma State	13	26	0	0	0	0	156	12.00
5. Quinn Sharp, Oklahoma State	13	0	79	80	22	25	145	11.15
6. Trent Richardson, Alabama	13	24	0	0	0	0	144	11.08
7. Randy Bullock, Texas A&M	13	0	55	57	29	33	142	10.92
8. Robert Turbin, Utah State	13	23	0	0	0	0	138	10.62
9. Zach Line, SMU	10	17	0	0	0	0	102	10.20
10. Terrance Ganaway, Baylor	13	22	0	0	0	0	132	10.15

TOTAL OFFENSE	GM	RUSH	NET	PYDS	TOT	YDS/G
1. Case Keenum, Houston	14	57	35	5631	5666	404.71
2. Robert Griffin III, Baylor	13	179	699	4293	4992	384.00
3. Brandon Weeden, Oklahoma State	13	17	-102	4727	4625	355.77
4. Nick Foles, Arizona	12	43	-103	4334	4231	352.58
5. Alex Carder, Western Michigan	12	128	270	3873	4143	345.25
6. Landry Jones, Oklahoma	13	32	-24	4463	4439	341.46
7. Seth Doege, Texas Tech	12	54	46	4004	4050	337.50
8. Geno Smith, West Virginia	13	56	-33	4385	4352	334.77
9. Chandler Harnish, Northern Illinois	14	194	1379	3216	4595	328.21
10. Ryan Aplin, Arkansas State	13	161	588	3588	4176	321.23

PUNTING	GM	PUNT	YDS	AVG
1. Shawn Powell, Florida State	13	57	2681	47.04
2. Bobby Cowan, Idaho	12	88	4084	46.41
3. Quinn Sharp, Oklahoma State	13	47	2175	46.28
4. Ian Campbell, UTEP	12	48	2214	46.13
5. Ryan Allen, Louisiana Tech	13	83	3828	46.12
6. Brian Schmiedebusch, Bowling Green	12	57	2583	45.32
7. Dylan Breeding, Arkansas	13	53	2400	45.28
8. Sean Sellwood, Utah	13	50	2251	45.02
9. Trey Barrow, Missouri	13	62	2779	44.82
10. Brett Maher, Nebraska	13	59	2626	44.51

RECEIVING	GM	REC.	YDS	TD	AVG/G
1. Jordan White, Western Michigan	13	140	1911	17	147.00
2. Nick Harwell, Miami (OH)	11	97	1425	9	129.55
3. Kendall Wright, Baylor	13	108	1663	14	127.92
4. Patrick Edwards, Houston	14	89	1752	20	125.14
5. Justin Blackmon, Oklahoma State	13	121	1522	18	117.08
6. Marquess Wilson, Washington State	12	82	1388	12	115.67
7. Rishard Matthews, Nevada	12	91	1364	8	113.67
8. Robert Woods, USC	12	111	1292	15	107.67
9. Gerell Robinson, Arizona State	13	77	1397	7	107.46
10. Keenan Allen, California	13	98	1343	6	103.31

TEAM STATISTICS

TOTAL OFFENSE	GM	PLAYS	YDS	AVG	TD	AVG/G
1. Houston	14	1102	8387	7.61	93	599.07
2. Baylor	13	1000	7632	7.63	80	587.08
3. Oklahoma State	13	987	7096	7.19	81	545.85
4. Oregon	14	1015	7319	7.21	88	522.79
5. Oklahoma	13	1052	6660	6.33	63	512.31
6. Nevada	13	1037	6587	6.35	53	506.69
7. Texas A&M	13	1044	6373	6.10	60	490.23
8. Stanford	13	935	6361	6.80	73	489.31
9. Boise State	13	969	6257	6.46	81	481.31
9. Toledo	13	980	6257	6.38	72	481.31

TOTAL DEFENSE	GM	PLAYS	YDS	AVG	TDS	AVG/G
1. Alabama	13	720	2387	3.32	12	183.62
2. LSU	14	897	3661	4.08	15	261.50
3. South Carolina	13	835	3480	4.17	27	267.69
4. Florida State	13	859	3575	4.16	25	275.00
5. Georgia	14	870	3881	4.46	37	277.21
6. Michigan State	14	903	3884	4.30	33	277.43
7. Illinois	13	842	3720	4.42	31	286.15
8. Florida	13	848	3894	4.59	33	299.54
9. UCF	12	732	3640	4.97	25	303.33
10. Virginia Tech	14	865	4265	4.93	31	304.64

KICKOFF RETURNS	GM	RET	YDS	TDS	AVG
1. Purdue	13	44	1262	1	28.68
2. TCU	13	48	1355	3	28.23
3. UCF	12	42	1131	1	26.93
4. UTEP	12	49	1291	0	26.35
5. Western Kentucky	12	54	1409	1	26.09
6. Florida State	13	31	795	0	25.65
7. Nebraska	13	45	1146	1	25.47
8. Temple	13	36	915	1	25.42
9. Kansas State	13	50	1260	2	25.20
10. Arizona State	13	66	1658	3	25.12

SCORING OFFENSE	GM	TDS	XP	2XP	FG	SF	PTS	AVG
1. Houston	14	93	91	1	13	0	690	49.29
2. Oklahoma State	13	81	79	1	22	0	633	48.69
3. Oregon	14	88	80	5	9	0	645	46.07
4. Baylor	13	80	75	2	10	0	589	45.31
5. Boise State	13	81	71	0	6	0	575	44.23
6. Wisconsin	14	85	80	2	8	0	618	44.14
7. Stanford	13	73	68	1	17	1	561	43.15
8. Toledo	13	72	66	2	15	0	549	42.23
9. TCU	13	70	61	4	14	0	531	40.85
10. Oklahoma	13	63	61	0	25	0	514	39.54

SCORING DEFENSE	GM	TDS	KXP	OXP	FG	SF	PT	PT/G
1. Alabama	13	12	11	1	7	0	106	8.15
2. LSU	14	15	13	1	17	1	158	11.29
3. Temple	13	24	21	2	4	0	181	13.92
4. Florida State	13	25	20	0	8	1	196	15.08
5. Penn State	13	25	23	0	15	0	218	16.77
6. Michigan	13	27	26	1	12	0	226	17.38
7. Virginia Tech	14	31	28	0	11	0	247	17.64
8. Rutgers	13	28	22	0	16	0	238	18.31
9. UCF	12	25	21	2	15	0	220	18.33
10. Michigan State	14	33	29	2	8	1	257	18.36

PUNT RETURNS	GM	RET	YDS	TDS	AVG
1. FIU	13	15	239	1	15.93
2. Northwestern	13	8	127	0	15.88
3. Ole Miss	12	14	219	2	15.64
4. Fresno State	13	30	466	2	15.53
5. Arizona State	13	18	276	1	15.33
6. Wisconsin	14	22	332	1	15.09
7. Oregon State	12	12	181	2	15.08
8. Idaho	12	17	255	3	15.00
9. Texas	13	19	269	1	14.16
10. Texas A&M	13	32	435	1	13.59

RUSHING OFFENSE	GM	ATT	NET	AVG.	TDS	YDSPG
1. Army	12	740	4158	5.62	35	346.50
2. Georgia Tech	13	718	4114	5.73	45	316.46
3. Air Force	13	723	4092	5.66	43	314.77
4. Navy	12	694	3747	5.40	34	312.25
5. Oregon	14	629	4189	6.66	42	299.21
6. Utah State	13	623	3675	5.90	37	282.69
7. Temple	13	636	3335	5.24	38	256.54
8. Nevada	13	628	3218	5.12	29	247.54
9. Missouri	13	589	3172	5.39	30	244.00
10. Baylor	13	576	3063	5.32	37	235.62

RUSHING DEFENSE	GM	ATT	NET	AVG	TDS	YDS/G
1. Alabama	13	386	938	2.43	3	72.15
2. Florida State	13	458	1075	2.35	8	82.69
3. Stanford	13	364	1097	3.01	16	84.38
4. Connecticut	12	385	1028	2.67	11	85.67
5. LSU	14	460	1261	2.74	7	90.07
6. Cincinnati	13	456	1251	2.74	10	96.23
6. Texas	13	409	1251	3.06	15	96.23
8. ULM	12	386	1200	3.11	13	100.00
9. Michigan State	14	502	1407	2.80	11	100.50
10. Louisville	13	435	1307	3.00	11	100.54

PUNTING	GM	NO	YDS	AVG	TB	RET	R/YDS	NET/P
1. Oregon	14	49	2204	44.98	2	17	133	41.45
2. Florida State	13	57	2681	47.04	7	21	188	41.28
3. LSU	14	66	2909	44.08	6	20	73	41.15
4. Idaho	12	88	4099	46.58	10	31	310	40.78
5. Bowling Green	12	57	2583	45.32	8	15	111	40.56
6. UTEP	12	48	2214	46.13	6	22	150	40.50
7. Washington	13	52	2261	43.48	4	17	87	40.27
8. Louisiana Tech	13	85	3908	45.98	7	29	358	40.12
9. North Texas	12	74	3218	43.49	7	27	126	39.89
10. California	13	53	2345	44.25	6	17	119	39.74

PASS OFFENSE	GM	ATT	COM	INT	PCT	YDS	TDS	YDS/G
1. Houston	14	682	479	6	70.23	6301	54	450.07
2. Oklahoma State	13	595	428	13	71.93	5034	40	387.23
3. Arizona	12	577	398	15	68.98	4449	29	370.75
4. Baylor	13	424	307	6	72.41	4569	40	351.46
5. Oklahoma	13	583	365	16	62.61	4542	29	349.38
6. West Virginia	13	542	353	9	65.13	4509	32	346.85
7. Texas Tech	12	600	409	10	68.17	4145	31	345.42
8. Western Michigan	13	554	369	16	66.61	4385	40	337.31
9. Washington State	12	492	297	12	60.37	3867	30	322.25
10. Arizona State	13	527	333	13	63.19	4117	27	316.69

PASSING DEFENSE	GM	ATT	COMP	PCT	INT	YDS	TD	YDS/G
1. Alabama	13	334	164	49.10	13	1449	6	111.46
2. South Carolina	13	346	174	50.29	19	1712	14	131.69
3. Illinois	13	328	180	54.88	10	2110	15	162.31
4. Wisconsin	14	352	214	60.80	16	2291	15	163.64
5. Army	12	245	141	57.55	8	1972	19	164.33
6. Air Force	13	309	194	62.78	12	2168	21	166.77
7. Florida	13	341	186	54.55	8	2169	15	166.85
8. LSU	14	437	229	52.40	18	2400	7	171.43
9. Rutgers	13	355	184	51.83	19	2240	8	172.31
10. Georgia	14	430	218	50.70	20	2464	12	176.00

TURNOVERS	GM	+FUM	+INT	+TOT	-FUM	-INT	-TOT	-MAR
1. Oklahoma State	13	20	24	44	10	13	23	1.62
2. LSU	14	12	18	30	5	5	10	1.43
3. Toledo	13	16	14	30	7	7	14	1.23
4. Houston	14	10	21	31	9	6	15	1.14
4. Wisconsin	14	10	16	26	5	5	10	1.14
6. NC State	13	12	27	39	13	12	25	1.08
7. Kent State	12	17	14	31	10	9	19	1.00
7. Memphis	12	18	12	30	10	8	18	1.00
9. Cincinnati	13	17	16	33	7	14	21	.92
9. Kansas State	13	9	18	27	9	6	15	.92

It's a Dakota uprising

Was that a cry of exhilaration from the many North Dakota State supporters who watched the final seconds tick away on the Bison's 17-6 FCS Championship win over Sam Houston State on Jan. 7?

Or was it the Division I Football Championship Subdivision drawing in the breath of life?

With the subclassification reeling from its endless churn of quality programs to the seemingly greener pastures of FBS, the Bison went to Frisco, Texas, representing the fresh, new blood of the sometimes forgotten side of Division I.

The win over previously unbeaten SHSU capped a 14-1 season for Craig Bohl's crew, a year that included an eye-opening win over Minnesota of the Big Ten, and completed the transition of a former Division II power to FCS heavyweight.

"It happened a little bit faster than we expected," said Bohl, a Nebraska alum who modeled his program after Tom Osborne's.

"Our first year in the Missouri Valley (a 6-5 year in 2008) was a reality check for our players and coaches. It toughened us up. That probably accelerated our readiness to play on the national level.

"But make no mistake, when North Dakota State made this move to reclassify to FCS, we had our eyes set on winning a national championship."

Of the four Dakota schools (NDSU, North Dakota, South Dakota and South Dakota State) to move from Division II to FCS in the past decade, NDSU — which had eight national titles to its credit before the move — was always the Dakota most likely to succeed.

But its brethren have added value as well.

After winning the final title in the history of the Great West and finishing in the Top 25, rival UND adds a dangerous new wrinkle to the Big Sky race in 2012.

SDSU made the playoffs in 2009 and is expected to up the ante by breaking ground on a new football stadium in 2014. USD, which will join its rival, and NDSU, in the Missouri Valley this season, demonstrated its football commitment in December by hiring a former FCS-title winning coach in alumnus Joe Glenn, formerly of Montana and Wyoming.

Although the Dakotas may together be home to only about 1.5 million people (roughly the size of San Antonio), clearly the stakes are high when it comes to football in this sector of the Great Plains.

From a broader perspective, other FCS schools often have carried the football banner for their states.

Montana and Delaware — two of the benchmark programs in the classification — have combined for 10 title game appearances since 2000 and annually rank near the top of FCS attendance. New Hampshire is a perennial FCS playoff team, and rival Maine has been an occasional national player as well.

The uprising of the Dakotas further defeats the shopworn stigma of FCS as a group of "directional schools," and reinforces the notion that the championship subdivision can be a destination, not a stepping stone.

"What level you play football at has a lot to do with the type of institutions you are," said Big Sky commissioner Doug Fullerton, one of the leaders in developing the FCS brand over the past decade.

"All four of the Dakota schools — being the lead institutions in their states — are appropriate playing in Division I at the FCS level. They will all be great representatives at our level."

— Tony Moss

FCS TOP 25

1. Sam Houston State	Almost everyone back from team that was 14-0 before loss in FCS title game.
2. North Dakota State	Steady backfield of QB Brock Jensen, RB Sam Ojuri helped fuel championship.
3. Montana State	Junior QB DeNarius McGhee a Walter Payton Award candidate once again.
4. Towson	Coach Rob Ambrose building a CAA-champion bully in Baltimore suburbs.
5. Montana	Program in turmoil after coach firing, but Grizzlies have undeniable talent.
6. Appalachian State	LB Jeremy Kimbrough, CB Demetrius McCray lead perennial FCS contender.
7. Georgia Southern	RB Dominique Swope logged 750 yards over final five games of freshman year.
8. Old Dominion	Monarchs were 5-0 vs. rest of Virginia, including playoff win over Norfolk State.
9. Eastern Kentucky	Colonels found way into playoffs after slow start; deep, veteran team returns.
10. Wofford	Nation's top rushing team led by RB Eric Breitenstein (1,474 yards, 19 TDs).
11. Northern Iowa	Panthers lost a wealth of veteran leadership, but this program tends to reload.
12. Lehigh	Mountain Hawks have won 14 straight in Patriot League dating back to 2009.
13. James Madison	Dukes made playoffs, gave eventual champ NDSU a game in postseason.
14. Bethune-Cookman	QB Jackie Wilson seeks to lift Wildcats higher and higher into playoffs.
15. Illinois State	Redbirds thinking big after 7-4 year; QB Matt Brown a keeper.
16. Stephen F. Austin	If Brady Attaway can cut down on INTs (22), 'Jacks could be back in playoffs.
17. New Hampshire	QBs James Brady, Andy Vailas duking it out to take over starting job.
18. Murray State	High-octane Racers are exciting, but can they be consistent?
19. Harvard	League title the only incentive until Ivy presidents rethink silly playoff ban.
20. Youngstown State	Only team to beat North Dakota State last year seeks first playoff bid since '06.
21. Delaware	Will QB star emerge among two holdovers, ex-Bowling Green Trent Hurley?
22. Eastern Washington	Eags went from national title to 6-5, but will be tough on their own (red) turf.
23. Grambling State	QB D.J. Williams, with dad Doug as head coach, won SWAC as freshman.
24. Stony Brook	Running game should dazzle with Miguel Maysonet, ex-Iowa RB Marcus Coker.
25. Jacksonville State	With RB Washaun Ealey leading way, Gamecocks won share of OVC last year.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-FCS Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM			
QB	Casey Brockman	Sr.	Murray State
RB	Shakir Bell	Jr.	Indiana State
RB	Terrance West	So.	Towson
WR	Aaron Mellette	Sr.	Elon
WR	Ryan Spadola	Sr.	Lehigh
TE	Colin Anderson	Sr.	Furman
OL	Shelley Anthony	Sr.	Florida A&M
OL	Patrick Ford	Sr.	Eastern Kentucky
OL	Chris Howley	Sr.	Maine
OL	Blake Matthews	Sr.	Norfolk State
OL	Mike Sellers	Jr.	The Citadel
AP	Gralyn Crawford	Sr.	Stephen F. Austin
K	Zach Brown	Sr.	Portland State
DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM			
DL	Ben Obaseki	Sr.	Indiana State
DL	Willie Jefferson	Sr.	Stephen F. Austin
DL	Zach Minter	Sr.	Montana State
DL	Brent Russell	Sr.	Georgia Southern
LB	Wes Dothard	Jr.	Chattanooga
LB	Matt Evans	Sr.	New Hampshire
LB	Jeremy Kimbrough	Sr.	Appalachian St.
DB	Serge Kona	Sr.	Duquesne
DB	Kejuan Riley	Sr.	Alabama State
DB	Darnell Taylor	Sr.	Sam Houston St.
DB	Marcus Williams	Jr.	North Dakota St.
P	Jonathan Plisco	Sr.	Old Dominion
RET	Kevin Fogg	Sr.	Liberty
OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM			
QB	DeNarius McGhee	Jr.	Montana State
RB	Eric Breitenstein	Sr.	Wofford
RB	Tim Flanders	Jr.	Sam Houston St.
WR	Nicholas Edwards	Sr.	Eastern Washington
WR	Rodrick Rumble	Sr.	Idaho State
TE	Kyle Juszczyk	Sr.	Harvard
OL	Aaron Adams	Sr.	Eastern Kentucky
OL	Dominique Allen	Sr.	Central Arkansas
OL	FN Lutz III	Sr.	Indiana State
OL	Mike Vuono	Sr.	Lehigh
OL	Earl Watford	Sr.	James Madison
AP	Fabian Truss	Jr.	Samford
K	Tyler Sievertsen	Jr.	Northern Iowa
DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM			
DL	Brandon Copeland	Sr.	Penn
DL	Marquis Jackson	Sr.	Texas Southern
DL	Joseph Lebeau	Sr.	Jackson State
DL	Blake Oliaro	Jr.	San Diego
LB	Seth Allison	Sr.	Central Arkansas
LB	Keith Pough	Sr.	Howard
LB	Jody Owens	Sr.	Montana State
DB	Malcolm Bronson	Sr.	McNeese State
DB	Jordan Dangerfield	Sr.	Towson
DB	Demetrius McCray	Sr.	Appalachian St.
DB	B.W. Webb	Sr.	William & Mary
P	Patrick Murray	Sr.	Fordham
RET	Darius Carey	Sr.	McNeese State

THE BIG ONES

SEPTEMBER 29
North Dakota State at Northern Iowa
UNI-Dome ought to be rocking for matchup of Missouri Valley's two 2011 playoff entries.

OCTOBER 6
Stephen F. Austin vs. Sam Houston State (Houston, TX)
"Battle of the Piney Woods," to be played at Houston's Reliant Stadium, should feature plenty of points.

OCTOBER 20
Old Dominion at Towson
Monarchs and Tigers represent the new strength of the CAA; Towson won 39-35 dogfight a year ago.

NOVEMBER 3
Appalachian State at Georgia Southern
This rivalry is officially back: Mountaineers and Eagles exchanged seven-point wins the last two years.

NOVEMBER 17
Montana State at Montana
"Brawl of the Wild" between Cats and Griz is always tense; Montana walked away from Bozeman with 36-10 win last year.

2011 PLAYOFFS

FIRST ROUND
James Madison 20
Eastern Kentucky 17

Old Dominion 35
Norfolk State 18

Stony Brook 31
Albany 28

Central Arkansas 34
Tennessee Tech 14

SECOND ROUND
Georgia Southern 55
Old Dominion 48

Maine 34
Appalachian State 12

Montana 41
Central Arkansas 14

Sam Houston State 34
Stony Brook 27

Montana State 26
New Hampshire 25

Lehigh 40
Towson 38

North Dakota State 26
James Madison 14

Northern Iowa 28
Wofford 21

QUARTERFINALS
Montana 48
Northern Iowa 10

Sam Houston State 49
Montana State 13

Georgia Southern 35
Maine 23

North Dakota State 24
Lehigh 0

SEMIFINALS
Sam Houston State 31
Montana 28

North Dakota State 35
Georgia Southern 7

CHAMPIONSHIP
North Dakota State 17
Sam Houston State 6

NORTH DAKOTA STATE

Photo by Jesse Johnson-US PRESSWIRE

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Shakir Bell	Terrance West	Matt Evans	Marcus Coker
RB, Indiana State	RB, Towson	LB, New Hampshire	RB, Stony Brook

FCS CONFERENCES

BIG SKY CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: DeNarius McGhee, QB, Montana State
Defensive Player of the Year: Jody Owens, LB, Montana State

Montana is not a stranger to the Big Sky spotlight, as the perennial FCS power has won or shared the conference title 13 times in the past 14 years. But the Grizzlies certainly didn't want center stage in this production. The Griz, national semifinalists a year ago, begin the 2012 season under a cloud of controversy after third-year coach Robin Pflugrad, along with AD Jim O'Day, were fired March 29 amid a scandal involving sexual assault allegations against a number of UM football players. Interim coach Mick Delaney will be under terrific scrutiny as he deals with that fallout as well as the loss of eight players who earned first- or second-team all-conference honors. The situation in Missoula helps hated rival Montana State into the favorite role, but an MSU championship is not a fait accompli in a league that welcomes in four competitive programs (North Dakota, Southern Utah, UC Davis and Cal Poly) from the Great West. Then, there is Eastern Washington, just a year removed from a national championship, and Portland State, which made a five-game improvement under second-year coach Nigel Burton in 2011.

1. Montana State	Cats are stacked on D: LB Owens, DT Zach Minter, DE Brad Daly lead the way.
2. Montana	QB Jordan Johnson faced sexual assault complaint in March, but will return.
3. Eastern Washington	Ex-SMU QB Kyle Padron will replace Payton Award winner Bo Levi Mitchell.
4. North Dakota	Six all-leaguers back from team that finished season ranked 23rd in country.
5. Portland State	Viks were top 20 nationally in offense, but must replace QB Connor Kavanaugh.
6. Cal Poly	Favorable schedule, good offense make Tim Walsh's Mustangs a sleeper.
7. Weber State	John L. Smith abandoned alma mater for Arkansas after just four months on job.
8. Northern Arizona	Returning RB Zach Bauman (1435 yds., 15 TD) led Big Sky rushers in '11.
9. Southern Utah	QB and Payton candidate Brad Sorensen (3,143 passing yards) is a handful.
10. UC Davis	Aggies (19 points per game) will need offense to compete in this league.
11. Sacramento State	Hornets opened with stunning Oregon State win, went 3-7 the rest of the way.
12. Idaho State	Bengals (2-9) were outscored 313-89 over final eight games of 2011.
13. Northern Colorado	Bears seek recovery from 0-11 mark in first season under Earnest Collins.

BIG SOUTH CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Miguel Maysonet, RB, Stony Brook
Defensive Player of the Year: Andrae Jacobs, LB, Coastal Carolina

Defending conference champion Stony Brook, which won a playoff game a year ago and took top-seeded Sam Houston State down to the wire in the Round of 16, has added Iowa transfer RB Marcus Coker, who finished in the FBS top 10 in rushing a year ago. Coker will split carries with Maysonet, the reigning league Offensive Player of the Year. Looking to supplant the Seawolves will be Liberty, which will usher in a new coaching era as ex-Kansas coach Turner Gill replaces Richmond-bound Danny Rocco. Gill inherits a league-high nine players who earned all-conference honors a year ago. Meanwhile, Coastal Carolina welcomes new coach Joe Moglia, who spent 25 years on Wall Street and was last a paid college coach at Dartmouth ... in 1983. Elsewhere in the Big South, look out for Gardner-Webb, which brings back seven all-conference players.

1. Stony Brook	Nation's No. 1 scoring offense (38 ppg) will be scarier with Coker in the fold.
2. Liberty	Gill has a big challenge in replacing QB Mike Brown, WR Chris Summers.
3. Coastal Carolina	Chants seeking more consistency from QB Aramis Hillary (14 TD, 5 INT).
4. Gardner-Webb	D-line combo of Preston Pemasa, Matt Goods, give Runnin' Bulldogs hope.
5. Presbyterian	Rough non-league slate includes trips to Georgia Tech (Sept. 8), Vandy (Sept. 15).
6. Charleston Southern	Bucs have FCS' longest losing streak (12 games) as 2012 begins.
7. VMI	Overmatched Keydets were 110th in FCS offense, 95th in defense a year ago.

CAA FOOTBALL

Offensive Player of the Year: Terrance West, RB, Towson
Defensive Player of the Year: Matt Evans, LB, New Hampshire

It was a down year of sorts in the CAA. While the deepest conference in FCS matched its own record by placing five teams in the playoffs, as well as six in the season-ending Top 20, no league member advanced farther than the quarterfinals. Odds are that scenario won't be repeated in 2012 for a conference with seven FCS title game appearances — including wins for four different teams — from 2003-10. The CAA's primary hopes rest with Towson, which came out of nowhere to win the league for the first time before being stunned by Lehigh in the Round of 16. Rob Ambrose's club should be better this year, with West, the Jerry Rice Award winner last year as the nation's top freshman, fueling the charge. Old Dominion, which brings back nine of its 11 All-CAA selections from a year ago, could also be scary. New Hampshire made its eighth straight playoff appearance last year and it would be silly to predict against a ninth. Beyond that trio, who knows? Maine was a surprise last year, but hasn't had back-to-back winning seasons since 2002-03. Richmond and Villanova were awful last year, but both are recently removed from national titles. Delaware, James Madison and William & Mary have been inconsistent, but boast strong foundations.

1. Towson	West will put eight-game streak of multi-TD games on line at Kent State (Aug. 30).
2. Old Dominion	QB Taylor Heinicke was runner-up to West for Jerry Rice Award.
3. James Madison	CAA's top 'D' welcomes back all-league linebacker Stephon Robertson (114 tackles).
4. New Hampshire	LB Evans vying for first back-to-back Buck Buchanan Awards since Dexter Coakley.
5. Delaware	RB Andrew Pierce has 2,934 career rushing yards, 33 TDs, and (gulp) two years left.
6. Maine	Returning to playoffs tough following loss of QB Warren Smith, RB Pushaun Brown.
7. William & Mary	Backfield spots up for grabs, but WR Ryan Moody is a stabilizing piece.
8. Villanova	Cats (17.2 points per game in '11) must find offense to return to FCS elite.
9. Richmond	After stunning fall to 0-8 in CAA, ex-Liberty coach Danny Rocco takes over.
10. Rhode Island	Charter member of league in 1947 will exit to lower-cost NEC in 2013.
Georgia State	Panthers ineligible for CAA title as transition to FBS and Sun Belt begins.

IVY LEAGUE

Offensive Player of the Year: Jeff Mathews, QB, Cornell
Defensive Player of the Year: Brandon Copeland, DL, Penn

Harvard was back in the Ivy League catbird seat last year, winning all seven of its conference games by double-digits and ending Penn's two-year reign at the top of the Ancient Eight. Six players who won first-or second-team Ivy honors are back for Tim Murphy's squad, most in the league. Penn had its 18-game Ivy League winning streak snapped last October and suddenly looked fallible, going 1-3 over its final four games and dropping to 5-5. The Quakers were senior-dominated, but history suggests they'll be a factor in 2012. Beyond the "power two," look out for Cornell, which welcomes back QB Jeff Mathews, the league's Offensive Player of the Year, to lead a passing attack that finished in the top five nationally a year ago.

1. Harvard	Part-time starting QB Colton Chapple is back to lead nation's second-best scoring attack.
2. Penn	All-Ivy DL Copeland bright spot on unit that was inconsistent in 2011.
3. Cornell	Big Red went from two wins to five, and played their best ball at the end of the year.
4. Brown	Graduation stole nine Bears who earned All-Ivy honors for 7-3 team last season.
5. Yale	Ex-Harvard assistant Tony Reno takes over after embarrassing Tom Williams era.
6. Dartmouth	Big Green placed 10 on All-Ivy team last year; all but LB Bronson Green have departed.
7. Princeton	DL combo of Caraun Reid and Mike Catapano gives 1-9 Tigers hope for improvement.
8. Columbia	One-time Cornell coach Pete Mangurian accepted what could be D-I's toughest job.

MID-EASTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Mike Mayhew, RB, North Carolina A&T
Defensive Player of the Year: Keith Pough, LB, Howard

The MEAC wasn't exactly rewarded for spurning a bowl tie-in with the SWAC in favor of a renewed commitment to the FCS playoffs, as league champion Norfolk State failed to earn a bye to the second round, and Bethune-Cookman was denied an at-large berth despite a season-ending six-game win streak that included a win at NSU. Then again, the league hasn't helped its cause by failing to win a playoff game since 1999, a drought that continued with Norfolk's loss to Old Dominion. The top of the league is strong, with five teams (NSU, Bethune-Cookman, South Carolina State, Florida A&M and Hampton) coming off 7-4 or better seasons and a wealth of talent returning. The overall stability of the conference has improved too: after five coaching changes in the 2011 offseason, no MEAC jobs turned over in 2012.

1. Bethune-Cookman	RB Isidore Jackson gutted league champ Norfolk State for 206 yards.
2. South Carolina State	Bulldogs have won at least seven games in each of Buddy Pough's 10 years.
3. Florida A&M	Rattlers have MEAC-best four returning all-league picks from 7-4 squad.
4. Norfolk State	Spartans could take step back after losing nine of 11 All-MEAC picks.
5. Hampton	Pirates are close under Donovan Rose, but have to win more nail-biters.
6. Howard	QB Greg McGhee was MEAC's top rookie; Bison went from one win to five.
7. North Carolina A&T	Mayhew needs 163 yards to become A&T's all-time leading rusher.
8. N.C. Central	Eagles are improving under Henry Frazier; WR Geovonie Irvine is a weapon.
9. Morgan State	Bears need answers on offense after struggling to move ball again.
10. Delaware State	Wideout Justin Wilson (1,600 career yards) among FCS' best-kept secrets.
11. Savannah State	Yikes: Tigers open with Oklahoma State, Florida State.

MISSOURI VALLEY FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Shakir Bell, RB, Indiana State
Defensive Player of the Year: Marcus Williams, CB, North Dakota State

North Dakota State defended the reputation of the Missouri Valley in 2011 -- literally. Though the traditionally tough league earned just two bids to the 20-team FCS playoffs, NDSU showed the might of The Valley during a stifling run to the championship that saw it allow just 27 points in four weeks. The Bison will wear the proverbial target this year, and coach Craig Bohl must replace six of nine players who earned all-league first- or second-team honors. UNI, which made its seventh playoff appearance in 11 years under Mark Farley a year ago, will again be a tough out. Beyond that duo, look out for Illinois State and Indiana State, led by star returnees in Redbirds QB Matt Brown and Sycamores RB Shakir Bell. Youngstown State showed the top-to-bottom strength of the league in a seven-day period last year, going on the road to hand eventual FCS champ NDSU its lone loss of the year before losing at home to 2-9 Missouri State the following Saturday.

1. North Dakota State	Secondary, led by CB Marcus Williams and S Colten Heagle, might be FCS' best.
2. Northern Iowa	With new QB in tow, Panthers will travel to Wisconsin (Sept. 1), Iowa (Sept. 15).
3. Illinois State	Redbirds did a 180 on 'D', leading good defensive league in yards allowed.
4. Youngstown State	Historical FCS heavyweight went from 3-8 to 6-5, was lone team to beat NDSU.
5. Indiana State	Bell went for 200-plus yards four times, including 256 and 4 TDs vs. Youngstown.
6. South Dakota State	Austin Sumner back to lead league's No. 1 passing attack (287 ypg).
7. Southern Illinois	Salukis hurt by star RB Jewel Hampton's decision to enter NFL draft.

8. South Dakota	New coach Joe Glenn faces former team, Montana, to open tenure.
9. Western Illinois	Jekyll-and-Hyde Leathernecks went from 1-10 to playoffs to 2-9 a year ago.
10. Missouri State	Hopes rest with junior QB Trevor Wooden (17 pass TDs, 7 rush TD).

NORTHEAST CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Jordan Brown, RB, Bryant
Defensive Player of the Year: Serge Kona, S, Duquesne

The NEC moved closer to national respectability last year, with league champ Albany finishing in the national Top 25 and just missing the conference's first FCS playoff win in a 31-28 loss to former conference member Stony Brook. The Great Danes and Duquesne shared the league title (Albany won the head-to-head meeting) and return 11 all-league picks between them and remain the lead dogs. Upstart Bryant, which handed Albany its only league loss, is well worth watching too. Robert Morris and Central Connecticut State suffered dramatic falls from grace last year but have been historically tough and are bounce-back candidates.

1. Albany	Can Great Danes replace QB Dan Di Lella, the NEC's total offense leader?
2. Duquesne	Kona helped Dukes lead nation in passing defense from his safety position.
3. Bryant	Brown a top Walter Payton Award candidate after 1,815-yard, 19 TD season.
4. Monmouth	How bizarre: Hawks were 0-6 at home, 5-0 on the road in 2011.
5. Central Conn. State	Season-closing blowout of Bryant offers hope entering 2012.
6. Wagner	Dominique Williams (1,338 yards, 15 TDs) another of league's fine RBs.
7. Sacred Heart	Junior Tim Little returns to engineer NEC's best passing attack (237.8 ypg).
8. Robert Morris	Offense that finished 114th in FCS is in desperate need of playmakers.
9. Saint Francis (Pa.)	RB Kyle Harbridge won attention for 346-yard rushing day vs. Morehead State.

OHIO VALLEY CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Casey Brockman, QB, Murray State
Defensive Player of the Year: Ichiro Vance, LB, Eastern Kentucky

After a contentious league race that saw Tennessee Tech, Eastern Kentucky and Jacksonville State finish tied atop the standings, the OVC sent two to the FCS playoffs for a second straight year. But Tech and EKU went one-and-done, extending a drought that has seen the OVC go 0-16 in the playoffs since its last win in 2000. The best hope to end that streak probably rests with EKU, which returns eight All-OVC players from a team that was edged by James Madison in the playoff's opening round. Murray State and its high-octane offense, led by Walter Payton Award candidate Brockman, also have high aspirations. Jacksonville State, which has posted nine consecutive winning seasons and has been sniffing around FBS membership, also figures to be a factor along with Tennessee Tech, last year's auto-bid recipient.

1. Eastern Kentucky	RB Matt Denham logged jaw-dropping 1,476 yards over final eight games.
2. Murray State	Brockman leads "O" that ranked fourth in FCS offense (461 yards per game).
3. Jacksonville State	Drama: Gamecocks and ex-Razorbacks coach Jack Crowe face Arkansas on Sept. 1.
4. Tennessee Tech	Golden Eagles seek to build on 7-4 mark, first postseason bid since 1972.
5. Tennessee State	TSU went from 0-7 to 4-4 in league; QB Michael German was top OVC freshman.
6. Southeast Missouri	Redhawks' drop to 3-8 had much to do with 107th-ranked FCS defense.
7. UT Martin	Wideout Quentin Sims has NFL size (6-3, 202); posted 10 TD catches a year ago.
8. Austin Peay	Coach Rick Christophel on hot seat? Govs have posted 13-31 mark since '08.
9. Eastern Illinois	Panthers tabbed Baylor assistant Dino Babers to replace retiring legend Bob Spoo.

PATRIOT LEAGUE

Offensive Player of the Year: Ryan Spadola, WR, Lehigh
Defensive Player of the Year: Robert McCabe, LB, Georgetown

Lehigh's reign atop the Patriot League continues, as the Mountain Hawks swept conference foes and stunned CAA champ Towson in the playoffs before succumbing to eventual national champ North Dakota State. If Andy Coen's team is to three-peat, it will have to do so without All-American QB Chris Lum. Senior Michael Colvin, who played in the team's Wildcat package, is the top candidate to start in Lum's place. After Lehigh, it's a crapshoot. Were improved marks for long-struggling Georgetown and Bucknell mere aberrations? Can once-proud programs at Colgate and Lafayette — one combined playoff appearance since 2007 — return to their former glory? Lehigh hopes those answers are "yes" and "no," in that order.

1. Lehigh	Can productive WR Spadola keep pace without Lum making throws?
2. Georgetown	Big strides last year, but 34-12 season-ending loss to Lehigh shows distance remains.
3. Holy Cross	Crusaders have good WR in Gerald Mistretta, but no experienced QB.
4. Bucknell	Five-win improvement to 6-5 paced by Patriot's top-rated defense (301.6 yards per game).
5. Colgate	QB Gavin McCarney (750 rushing yards, 1,649 passing yards) makes Raiders go.
6. Lafayette	Young offensive pieces like RB Russ Scheuerman and WR Mark Ross offer hope.
XX Fordham	Ex-UConn asst. Joe Moorhead takes over scholarship program still ineligible for PL title.

PIONEER FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Offensive Player of the Year: Lanny Funsten, WR, Davidson
Defensive Player of the Year: Blake Oliaro, DE, San Diego

The non-scholarship Pioneer is the lone FCS league still left out of the playoff system involuntarily, but that could change if proposed legislation to expand the bracket from 20 to 24 teams in 2013 passes as expected. Until then, the carrot for the PFL remains a league title, with 2011 co-champs San Diego and Drake serving as this year's favorites. Jacksonville should also compete despite failing to live up to its preseason billing in 2011, and the historically strong program at Dayton and up-and-coming one at Campbell are not to be ignored.

1. San Diego	RB Kenny James (1,149 yards, 15 TD) among the great underrated FCS players.
2. Jacksonville	Kerwin Bell flirted with SEC coordinator jobs, but stayed at helm of Dolphins.
3. Drake	Chris Creighton must replace eight players who made top two All-PFL teams.
4. Dayton	QB Will Bardo (1206 passing yds, 491 rushing yds.) should make strides as a soph.
5. Campbell	Camels counted blowout of San Diego among highlights of first winning season.
6. Butler	Standout LB Jordan Ridley looks to help Bulldogs avoid third straight losing mark.
7. Davidson	Funsten never caught fewer than seven balls in a game.
8. Marist	Red Foxes were No. 1 in league in defense (285.6 yards per game) and pass defense.
9. Morehead State	QB Zach Lewis led PFL in total offense; 107th-ranked defense must help him out.
10. Valparaiso	Crusaders have lost 30 of 31, but win over Campbell last Nov. 12 showed progress.

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Eric Breitenstein, FB, Wofford
Defensive Player of the Year: Brent Russell, DT, Georgia Southern

The three-team stranglehold atop the SoCon remained in place last year, as Georgia Southern, App State and Wofford — which have accounted for 11 of the league's 12 playoff berths since 2007 — all found themselves in the field of 20. It was conference champ GSU advancing the farthest for a second straight year, reaching the national semifinals before losing to eventual champ North Dakota State. With several key graduation losses, third-year coach Jeff Monken's recruiting ability will come into sharp focus this season. ASU, which failed to win a playoff game for the first time since 2004, will be hot on the Eagles' trail along with Wofford, which made headlines of an unwanted kind in December when return man Stephon Shelton's failure to kneel on a kickoff helped fuel a playoff loss at Northern Iowa. Sleepers include Furman, which is looking for either senior Dakota Derrick or redshirt freshman Travis Eman to emerge at QB, and Chattanooga, which lost four games by two points or fewer last season.

1. Appalachian State	Jamal Jackson (15 TD passes in eight starts) offers ASU new aerial element.
2. Georgia Southern	Seven all-league players gone from team that made back-to-back FCS semifinals.
3. Wofford	Playoff lowlights made gag reel, but SoCon foes don't laugh at tough Terriers.
4. Furman	Paladins must replace QB Chris Forcier, FCS' most efficient passer in 2011.
5. Chattanooga	DL Josh Williams, LB Wes Dothard back to lead SoCon's top-rated defense.
6. Elon	WR Aaron Mellette great, but team last in FCS turnover margin (minus-22).
7. Samford	RB Fabian Truss led SoCon in all-purpose yardage (177.4 per game) as a soph.
8. The Citadel	Bulldogs (318.8 yards per game) need more offense to break from 3-4 win cycle.
9. Western Carolina	Ex-App State assistant Mark Speir takes over program that is 11-56 since '06.

SOUTHLAND CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Tim Flanders, RB, Sam Houston State
Defensive Player of the Year: Darnell Taylor, S, Sam Houston State

The best season in Sam Houston State's history also spelled great things for the Southland, which placed its first team in the national championship since 2002, and also for FCS, which sold out its sometimes attendance-challenged title game at lightning speed. SHSU's perfect season came apart in a 17-6 finals loss to North Dakota State, but the Bearkats have well-founded hopes of righting that wrong. Twelve of the 15 players to earn first- or second-team all-league honors are back, including the All-American Flanders (1,644 rushing yards, 24 TDs). Chasing the Bearkats will be Central Arkansas, which reached the playoffs but must replace QB Nathan Dick, and Stephen F. Austin, which finished the year on a five-game win streak and returns most of its key pieces.

1. Sam Houston State	Bearkats hope to give Baylor (Sept. 15), Texas A&M (Nov. 17) some headaches.
2. Stephen F. Austin	WR Cordell Roberson, HB Grayln Crawford combined for 135 catches, 16 TD.
3. Central Arkansas	Wynrick Smothers, Arkansas transfer Jacoby Walker dueling for QB duties.
4. McNeese State	S Malcolm Bronson (90 tackles, 3 INT) one of league's brightest defensive lights.
5. Northwestern State	Can Demons turn corner under coach Bradley Dale Peveto (10-23 in three years)?
6. Lamar	Cardinals need to fix defense that allowed 30-plus points nine times in 4-7 year.
7. SE Louisiana	New coach Ron Roberts arrives from D-II Delta State, where he went 47-16.
8. Nicholls State	1-10 team averaged fewer than 300 yards, 20 points per game; must find offense.

SOUTHWESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Dawrence Roberts, RB, Grambling State
Defensive Player of the Year: Kejuan Riley, FS, Alabama State

Coach Doug Williams picked up right where he left off at Grambling State, returning to his alma mater after seven years and promptly beating Alabama A&M in thrilling fashion for his fourth SWAC title. Williams' future at GSU was in doubt in the spring due to a contract squabble with Grambling and the Louisiana university system board, but the former Super Bowl MVP is expected to return. Unless Arkansas-Pine Bluff can be more consistent or once-proud Southern can get off the mat under embattled Stump Mitchell, Grambling should have the SWAC West to itself again. The East will be more contentious, as Alabama A&M, Alabama State and a Jackson State team that finished last year in the national Top 25 all have solid teams returning.

EAST DIVISION	
1. Alabama A&M	QB Deaunte Mason (512 rushing yards, 11 pass TD) is league's top returning QB.
2. Alabama State	Five All-SWAC picks back, Buck Buchanan Award candidate Riley among them.
3. Jackson State	Dedric McDonald won spring battle to replace departed star QB Casey Therriault.
4. Alcorn State	Braves fired Melvin Spears after one year; Todd McDaniel is interim HC.
5. Mississippi Valley	Delta Devils are 1-20 under Karl Morgan, but are getting more competitive.

WEST DIVISION	
1. Grambling State*	Roberts (1,102 yards, 8 TD) rushed for 175-plus four times in final nine games.
2. Arkansas-Pine Bluff	QB Benjamin Anderson (1,921 passing yards, 10 TD) was SWAC's top freshman.
3. Southern	Mitchell flirted with St. Louis Rams assistant job ... is writing on wall for exit?
4. Prairie View	Graduation hit hard: Panthers lost all five All-SWAC honorees from 5-6 club.
5. Texas Southern	Tigers led FCS in total defense (245 yards per game), but only translated it to 4-7.

* - Overall conference champion

Title in Hand, Pittsburg State Ready for Next Step

The Gorillas finally got the monkey off their back.

But to climb to perennial powerhouse status, Pittsburg State must overcome steep odds in trying to defend its first national title in 20 years.

Head coach Tim Beck had around 100 players participate in spring practice as he looked to replace the 22 seniors who departed from last year's roster. Primary among those gone was quarterback Zac Dickey, who led the team in passing (2,290 yards, 17 touchdowns) and rushing (1,165 yards, 10 touchdowns) in 2011.

Sophomore Anthony Abenoja is expected to take his place, and the Gorillas' faith in him was evident as he was named one of seven captains for this season. A total of 13 starters return, and Pittsburg State's run-based offense and strong pass rush should keep the Gorillas a formidable force.

"Winning the national championship was a tremendous accomplishment, but now we have moved on to the 2012 season," Beck said during the spring.

"We need to create our own identity for this team. After losing 22 seniors from last year's squad, we have new players we are looking for to step up and be great leaders."

High turnover is part of the annual battle for all Division II programs, and after a wild postseason in 2011, there is no shortage of contenders for the Gorillas' throne.

Minnesota-Duluth, the 2010 national champion, suffered a shocking upset in the quarterfinals to Wayne State, snapping a 14-game home winning streak. The Bulldogs are 52-5 over the past four seasons and lose 13 seniors, but quarterback Chase Vogler returns along with a host of experienced players searching for a fifth consecutive Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference title.

Last season saw strong postseason runs from Wayne State, Winston-Salem State, New Haven and North Greenville, but traditional powers continue to lurk.

Northwest Missouri State reached the quarterfinals in Adam Dorrel's first season, replacing the legendary Mel Tjeerdsma, and Grand Valley State has loads of experience returning from a team that made a strong charge after an uncharacteristically slow start in 2011.

Ron Roberts wasn't able to push Delta State over the final hurdle to a national title in seven years at the helm, but he did lead the Fighting Okra to a 47-15 record over the past five seasons and a semifinal appearance in 2011 before parlaying that success into the head job at Southeastern Louisiana.

Roberts' final victory at Delta State was over North Greenville, and the athletic department was apparently impressed with what it saw from the Crusaders and tapped coach Jamey Chadwell to run the program.

Chadwell isn't sitting pat, installing the spread option and transitioning the defense from a 4-3 to a 3-4 scheme.

With a strong core returning in the backfield, Chadwell could experience early success if quarterback Kevin Vye picks up the offense and the new 3-4 scheme upgrades a unit that allowed 26.1 points per game last season.

—Derek Harper

DIVISION II TOP 25

1. Pittsburg State	Run-heavy offense helps Gorillas wear opponents down, but 22 seniors departed.
2. Minnesota-Duluth	Won or shared four straight NSIC titles; 15 returning starters could lead to shot at title.
3. NW Missouri State	Jr. QB Trevor Adams went 6-2, won two road playoff games when thrust into job.
4. Midwestern State	QB Brandon Kelsey was fourth in Harlon Hill; has backfield stud in RB Keidrick Jackson.
5. Wayne State (MI)	Can build on improbable run to title game (four road wins) behind Sr. QB Mickey Mohner.
6. Delta State	Transition year with new head coach Jamey Chadwell installing spread option and 3-4.
7. Winston-Salem State	Fifteen starters return from historic season for HBCU team, including run to semis.
8. Colorado St.-Pueblo	So. RB J.B. Matthews takes over lead role from Jesse Lewis in run-dominated attack.
9. Grand Valley State	Closed '11 with seven straight wins; poised for big rebound with 20 returning starters.
10. New Haven	Chargers won by average of 24.1 points in going 8-0 in NE-10 last season.
11. Valdosta State	Offense could be dynamic with standout OTs & QBs Justin Roberts, Cayden Cochran.
12. North Alabama	Bobby Wallace returns to program he led to three straight titles from 1993-95.
13. Abilene Christian	QB Mitchell Gale (3,823 yds, 28 TDs in '11) is prolific, but o-line a work in progress.
14. West Alabama	Plenty of senior leadership returning; QB Kyle Caldwell should hold off Gary Johnston.
15. Washburn	QB Dane Simoneau, three other d2football.com All-Americans must be replaced.
16. North Greenville	Lost to Delta State in quarters, then lost coach to Fighting Okra. Carroll McCray takes over.
17. Nebraska-Kearney	Move from RMAC to MIAA while replacing 11 seniors on offense.
18. Elizabeth City	RB Daronte McNeill school's all-time rushing leader; owns 14 ECSU and CIAA records.
19. Kutztown	RB Josh Mastromatto has big task with Robbie Frey (1,185 rush yds) chasing NFL dream.
20. Hillsdale	RB Joe Glendening rushed for 1,604 yds, 27 TDs in '11; tied GLIAC record with 180 points.
21. California (PA)	Vulcans must replace trio of DLs that anchored stiff run defense (101.2 ypg) in '11.
22. St. Cloud State	Jr. QB Phillip Klaphake must step up with two RBs, two TEs and three OLs to replace.
23. Missouri Western St.	New option offense made spring strides, but Aug. 30 opener at Central Okla. true test.
24. Mars Hill	How much of offense was departed RB Jonas Randolph? He had 78% of team's carries.
25. Humboldt State	Lose 24 seniors; coach Rob Smith said in spring, "There are a lot of jobs open."

Lindy's 2012 ALL-DIV II Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Mitchell Gale	Sr.	Abilene Christian
RB	Joe Glendening	Sr.	Hillsdale
RB	Daronte McNeill	Sr.	Elizabeth City
WR	Chris Bowden	Sr.	Wingate
WR	Charles Johnson	Sr.	Grand Valley State
TE	Joe Don Duncan	Sr.	Dixie State
OL	Macon Allan	Sr.	Missouri Western
OL	Garth Heikkinen	Sr.	Minnesota-Duluth
OL	Tim Lelito	Sr.	Grand Valley State
OL	Ken Van Huele	Sr.	Midwestern State
OL	Rod Williams	Sr.	Northwest Missouri
AP	John Brown	Jr.	Pittsburg State
K	Derek Koon	Jr.	Truman

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	David Bass	Sr.	Missouri Western
DL	Jonas Celian	Sr.	West Va. Wesleyan
DL	Tim Green	Sr.	Lincoln (PA)
DL	Tom Herd	Sr.	New Haven
LB	Jordan Campbell	Sr.	New Mex. Highlands
LB	Nate Dreiling	Jr.	Pittsburg State
LB	Cody Fleming	Sr.	Shippensburg
DB	Aaron Cornett	Sr.	Wayne State (MI)
DB	Alex Dinolfi	Sr.	Kutztown
DB	Rontez Miles	Sr.	California (PA)
DB	Richie Schumacher	Sr.	Truman
P	Taylor Accardi	Sr.	Colorado Mines

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Brandon Kelsey	Sr.	Midwestern State
RB	James Franklin	Jr.	Northwest Missouri St.
RB	Keidrick Jackson	Jr.	Midwestern State
WR	DeJuan Beard	Jr.	Washburn
WR	Isaiah Voegeli	Sr.	Merrimack
TE	David Pawelek	Sr.	Colorado Mines
OL	Logan Freeman	Sr.	Central Missouri
OL	Brett Frydendahl	Sr.	Humboldt State
OL	Mike Nelson	Jr.	Central Washington
OL	Ryan Schraeder	Sr.	Valdosta State
OL	Lamar Young	Sr.	Delta State
AP	Jonathan Woodson	Sr.	Texas A&M-Kingsville
K	Rockne Belmonte	Sr.	Northern Michigan

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Brad Davis	Sr.	Elizabeth City
DL	Vauchard Goodridge	Jr.	Clark Atlanta
DL	Howard Jones	Jr.	Shepherd
DL	Brandon Williams	Sr.	Missouri Southern
LB	Cody Bloom	Jr.	Ashland
LB	Jesse Robertson	Sr.	West Va. Wesleyan
LB	Marquis Wadley	Jr.	Tarleton State
DB	Derek Lohmann	Sr.	Emporia State
DB	Sam Kuck	Sr.	Nebraska-Kearney
DB	Marvin Matthews	Sr.	St. Cloud State
DB	Bryce Peila	Sr.	Western Oregon
P	Randy Weich	Sr.	Wayne State (Neb.)

THE BIG ONES

SEPTEMBER 22
North Alabama at Delta State
Both programs are attempting to remain national powers under new coaching staffs.

SEPTEMBER 29
Minnesota-Duluth at St. Cloud State
Huskies reached quarters last year, but got run off the field — 275 rushing yards allowed, by St. Cloud, 35-7, in regular season.

OCTOBER 13
Northwest Missouri State vs. Pittsburg State
Gorillas scored 18 fourth-quarter points to take the Fall Classic X at Arrowhead Stadium last year.

NOVEMBER 3
Wayne State (MI) at Grand Valley State
Critical home game sandwiched in middle of telltale final three-game stretch for Lakers.

NOVEMBER 10
North Alabama at West Alabama
UNA lured coach Bobby Wallace back; he spent 2006-10 with division-rival Tigers.

2011 PLAYOFFS

FIRST ROUND
North Alabama 43
West Alabama 27

North Greenville 63
Albany State 14

Northwest Missouri State 35
Missouri Western 29

Washburn 52
Abilene Christian 49

California (PA) 44
Elizabeth City State 0

Kutztown 17
Concord 14

Minnesota-Duluth 30
Saginaw Valley State 27 (OT)

Wayne State (MI) 48
St. Cloud State 38

SECOND ROUND
North Greenville 58
Mars Hill 32

Delta State 42
North Alabama 14

Pittsburg State 31
Washburn 22

Northwest Missouri State 38
Midwestern State 31 (OT)

New Haven 44
Kutztown 37

Winston-Salem State 35
California (PA) 28

Wayne State (MI) 38
Nebraska-Kearney 26

Minnesota-Duluth 24
Colorado State-Pueblo 21

QUARTERFINALS
Delta State 28
North Greenville 23

Pittsburg State 41
Northwest Missouri State 16

Winston-Salem State 27
New Haven 7

Wayne State (MI) 31
Minnesota-Duluth 25

SEMIFINALS
Wayne State (MI) 21
Winston-Salem State 14

Pittsburg State 49
Delta State 23

CHAMPIONSHIP
Pittsburg State 35
Wayne State (MI) 21

PITTSBURG STATE

Photo by Marvin Gentry-US PRESSWIRE

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Mitchell Gale	Daronte McNeill	Nate Dreiling	Rod Woodson
QB, Abilene Christian	RB, Elizabeth City	LB, Pittsburg State	SS, North Alabama

Wesley Keeps Knocking on the D-III Door

Wesley coach Mike Drass hears the question frequently.

"Is the domination of Mount Union and Wisconsin-Whitewater good for college football?"

Since 2005 those are the only two teams to play for a Division III national championship, but when Drass hears that question, he considers it an insult.

It's not that he thinks his team has been slighted, but rather it diminishes the accomplishments of the Warhawks and the Purple Raiders.

"I'll be honest with you, I think it's great for college football. We have 32 teams that strap it on for Week 1 of the playoffs and five weeks later you have a champion," Drass said.

"Each year those kids at Mount Union and Whitewater want it just as badly. When I hear that talk, 'Is it good for college football?' I take offense to that. Those kids that won that championship, they have earned it. It's up to the rest of us to work a little harder to knock those guys off that championship pedestal.

"They are the model for the rest of us. I know for my staff ... it drives us to recruit, to stay on the phone an extra hour, to bring in more families on visits, to bring in the best small college football players you can."

The Wolverines have made it to the final four in each of the past three seasons, losing to Mount Union twice and Wisconsin-Whitewater once.

In 2010, Wesley was the top overall seed before falling to Wisconsin-Whitewater, 27-7. And last year, Wesley led Mount Union, 14-13, early in the second half before falling 28-21. In that game, Wesley turned the ball over six times.

Wesley has another good chance this season. The Wolverines, who have reached the semifinals in five of the past seven years, return seven starters on offense and get back another, quarterback Justin Sottilare, who sat out one year after passing for a school-record 38 touchdowns in 2010.

Drass said Sottilare is one of the smartest quarterbacks he has ever seen, while freshman Joe Callahan was impressive in spring practice and could push for playing time.

Both quarterbacks will have potent weapons at their disposal.

Running back Askia Jahad had 146 carries for 872 yards and nine touchdowns last year. Receivers Matt Barile and Steve Koudossou are small, but their stats are impressive. The pair averaged 29.7 yards per catch and combined for 1,397 yards and 15 touchdowns.

The defense is loaded with playmakers, too. Devin Hardy — who is getting attention from pro scouts, Drass said — has 17.5 sacks in the past two seasons. Hardy will be the focus of the defense as the Wolverines look for replacements for two All-American linebackers.

Mount Union, which has missed the national championship game just twice since 1996, and has won it all 10 times dating back to 1993, looks like another favorite to return to the title game. Among the Raiders' returning players is safety Nick Driskill.

The *Lindy's* Preseason Defensive Player of the Year had 113 tackles, 17 tackles for loss, 6.5 sacks, four interceptions, one forced fumble and two fumble recoveries for the nation's top-ranked defense.

And while Wisconsin-Whitewater might look vulnerable on paper, the Warhawks also have a legitimate shot at returning to the Stagg Bowl. Despite graduating Matt Blanchard — a quarterback who never lost a game at the college level — the Warhawks get a tested and ready replacement in Lee Brekke, the backup in 2010 and 2011.

All he did was go 5-0 in the 2010 playoffs after Blanchard was injured, leading the Warhawks to the title.

— Dominick DiRienzo

DIVISION III TOP 25

1. Mt. Union	Purple Raiders have missed only two Stagg Bowls since 1996.
2. Wesley	Is this the year the Wolverines solve the Whitewater-Mt. Union puzzle?
3. UW-Whitewater	Backup QB Lee Brekke was 5-0 in playoffs in 2010 and gets the job this year.
4. St. Thomas	Sophomore QB Matt O'Connell is expected to take over starting job.
5. Delaware Valley	With nine starters back on offense, the favorite for fifth straight MAC title.
6. Widener	QB Chris Haupt was only junior among Gagliardi Trophy final 10 last year.
7. Redlands	QB-turned-RB Bobby Brown is one of 10 offensive starters back.
8. Franklin	Junior QB Johnny West is one of seven all-league players back for Griz.
9. St. John Fisher	Justified NCAA's gamble on two-loss team with trip to Elite 8 last season.
10. Mary Hardin-Baylor	LB Javicz Jones set school and conference records with 141 tackles in 2011.
11. North Central (Ill.)	RB Nick Kukuc averaged 8.6 yards per carry last year for a superb rushing team.
12. Centre	It was 90 years between Centre's last two postseason appearances.
13. Illinois College	OL Keith Lane (6-5, 300) and DL Kurt Frischman (6-2, 245) will power IC.
14. St. John's	One of only two MIAC schools to return its QB this season.
15. Bethel	All-MIAC LBs Seth Mathis and Erik Smith return for seventh-ranked defense.
16. Cal Lutheran	Six starters back on offense that averaged 484 yards per game.
17. Linfield	Must replace five starters in secondary, including two-time All-American Drew Fisher.
18. Salisbury	Christian Emezie on line that paved way for school-record 4,596 rushing yards.
19. Thomas More	PAC POY RB Domonique Hayden should lead Saints to sixth straight playoff berth.
20. Wittenberg	Leads D-III programs with 707 wins, but only two have come in postseason since 2009.
21. Wabash	Defense will have to carry Little Giants with offense returning just four starters.
22. RPI	Quarterback Mike Hermann passed for 14 TDs and rushed for 15 more.
23. Birmingham-Southern	Senior TB Shawn Morris averaged 8.6 yards per carry, could vault BSC to playoffs.
24. Trinity (Texas)	Fifteen starters return to avenge last year's first-round playoff loss.
25. Monmouth	Defending league champs must replace record-setting All-American QB Alex Tanney.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-DIV III Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM			
QB	Chris Haupt	Sr.	Widener
RB	Germany Woods	Jr.	Heidelberg
RB	Shawn Morris	Sr.	Birmingham-Southern
WR	John Babin	Jr.	Cortland State
WR	Alex Baroffio	Jr.	Washington & Jefferson
TE	Billy Chapman	Sr.	Middlebury
C	Curtis James	Sr.	St. Thomas
OG	John LaVelle	Sr.	Delaware Valley
OG	Michael Coles	Sr.	Mary Hardin-Baylor
OT	Antonio Tate	Sr.	Mount Union
OT	Weston Kitley	Sr.	Wabash
K	Allen Cain	Sr.	Texas Lutheran
DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM			
DE	Frank Weymiller	Sr.	Coe
DT	Tyler Steele	Sr.	Linfield
DT	D.J. Chappell	Sr.	Huntingdon
DE	Ben Lockton	Sr.	Benedictine
LB	Javicz Jones	Sr.	Mary Hardin-Baylor
LB	Nick Bricker	Jr.	TCNJ
LB	Devan Sproles	Sr.	Emory and Henry
CB	Troy Sant	Sr.	St. John Fisher
CB	Zach Morgan	Jr.	Hampden-Sydney
S	Jake Pelton	Sr.	Washington and Lee
S	Nick Driskill	Sr.	Mount Union
P	Christian Hallingstad	Sr.	Wisconsin-La Crosse
AP	Mike Graham	Sr.	Western New England
OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM			
QB	Justin Sottilare	Sr.	Wesley
RB	Darius Wilson	Sr.	Mary Hardin-Baylor
RB	Melikke Van Alstyne	Jr.	Framingham State
WR	Jasper Collins	Sr.	Mount Union
WR	Don Wodicka	Jr.	Johns Hopkins
TE	Adam Carl	Jr.	Augsburg
C	Colin Gallagher	Jr.	Franklin
OG	Nick Schultz	Sr.	Franklin
OG	Christian Emezie	Sr.	Salisbury
OT	Armand Jenifer	Jr.	Johns Hopkins
OT	Jace Werkheiser	Jr.	North Central
K	Dylan Rushe	Jr.	Endicott
DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM			
DE	Charles Dieuseul	Sr.	Mount Union
DT	Mike Raplee	Sr.	Alfred
DT	Rian Younker	Sr.	Cal Lutheran
DE	Tyre Coleman	So.	Hobart
LB	Dan Avento	Jr.	Montclair State
LB	Tazmon Foster	Jr.	N.C. Wesleyan
LB	Mike Hendrick	Sr.	Knox
CB	Josh Mitchell	Sr.	North Central (Ill.)
CB	Bobby Fischer	Sr.	Saint John's
S	Demetrius Johnson	Sr.	Coe
S	Dan Calabrese	Sr.	Case Western
P	Garrett Maloney	Jr.	St. Thomas
AP	Cliff Woodward	Jr.	Bridgewater (Va.)

THE **BIG** ONES

Sept. 8

Redlands at North Central	First game of season could be a rematch in playoffs.
Hardin-Simmons at Linfield	Linfield's first big test of daunting non-league slate.

Sept. 15

St. Thomas at St. John's	Game will establish MIAC hierarchy early.

Oct. 20

Trinity at Centre	Game decided SCAC championship last year.

Nov. 10

Union at RPI	Dutchman Shoes Trophy game is one of D-III's great traditions.

2011 PLAYOFFS

FIRST ROUND

Wisconsin-Whitewater 59
Albion 0

Franklin 24
Thomas More 21

Kean 34
Christopher Newport 10

Salisbury 62
Western New England 24

St. Thomas 48
St. Scholastica 2

Monmouth 33
Illinois Wesleyan 27 (3OT)

St. John Fisher 23
Johns Hopkins 12

Delaware Valley 62
Norwich 10

Mary Hardin-Baylor 34
Redlands 13

McMurry 25
Trinity (TX) 16

Linfield 30
Cal Lutheran 27

Wesley 35
Hobart 28

Wabash 38
Illinois College 20

North Central 59
Dubuque 13

Centre 51
Hampden-Sydney 41

Mount Union 47
Benedictine (IL) 7

SECOND ROUND

Wisconsin-Whitewater 41
Franklin 14

Salisbury 49
Kean 47 3OT

St. Thomas 38
Monmouth 10

St. John Fisher 27
Delaware Valley 14

Mary Hardin-Baylor 49
McMurry 20

Wesley 49
Linfield 34

Wabash 29
North Central 28

Mount Union 30
Centre 10

QUARTERFINALS

Wisconsin-Whitewater 34
Salisbury 14

St. Thomas 45
St. John Fisher 10

Wesley 27
Mary Hardin-Baylor 24

Mount Union 20
Wabash 8

SEMIFINALS

Mount Union 28
Wesley 21

Wisconsin-Whitewater 20
St. Thomas 0

CHAMPIONSHIP

Wisconsin-Whitewater 13
Mount Union 10

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Shawn Morris	Chris Haupt	Nick Driskill	Donald Senegal
Sr., Birmingham-Southern	Sr., Widener	Sr., Mount Union	Jr., Cal Lutheran

FANTASY FOOTBALL... THE TOP FIVE MISCONCEPTIONS

by Jim Belanger
CFFinsider.com

QUARTERBACKS

1.	Collin Klein	KNST
2.	Ryan Aplin	AKST
3.	Tyler Tettleton	OHIO
4.	Geno Smith	WVU
5.	Tajh Boyd	CLEM
6.	Matt Barkley	USC
7.	Denard Robinson	MICH
8.	Alex Carder	WMCH
9.	Kain Colter	NWU
10.	Cody Fajardo	NEV
11.	Brett Smith	WY
12.	Seth Doege	TXTC
13.	Logan Thomas	VATC
14.	Jordan Lynch	NIU
15.	James Franklin	MO
16.	Bryan Bennett	ORE
17.	Marcus Mariota	ORE
18.	Jeff Tuel	WAST
19.	Connor Halliday	WAST
20.	Zac Dysert	MIOH
21.	David Piland	HOU
22.	Landry Jones	OKLA
23.	Keith Price	WASH
24.	Braxton Miller	OSU
25.	Bryn Renner	UNC
26.	Nick Florence	BAY
27.	Colby Cameron	LATC
28.	Wes Lunt	OKST
29.	Riley Nelson	BYU
30.	Taylor Martinez	NEB
31.	Casey Pachall	TCU
32.	Derek Carr	FRST
33.	Aaron Murray	GA
34.	Tyler Wilson	Ark
35.	Matt Scott	ARZ
36.	David Graves	HAW
37.	Blaine Gautier	LALF
38.	Garrett Gilbert	SMU
39.	Joe Southwick	BOST
40.	Cody Green	TUL

RUNNING BACKS

1.	Montee Ball	WIS
2.	Joseph Randle	OKST
3.	Kenjon Barner	ORE
4.	Robbie Rouse	FRST
5.	Le'Veon Bell	MIST
6.	De'Anthony Thomas	ORE
7.	Charles Sims	HOU
8.	Branden Oliver	BUFF
9.	Marcus Lattimore	SOCAR
10.	Zach Line	SMU
11.	Rex Burkhead	NEB
12.	Stepfan Taylor	STAN
13.	John White	UTAH
14.	Knile Davis	ARK
15.	Giovani Bernard	UNC
16.	Dominique Whaley	OKLA
17.	Eddie Lacy	ALA
18.	Orleans Darkwa	TUL
19.	Matt Brown	TEMP
20.	Ray Graham	PITT
21.	David Fluellen	TOL
22.	Fitzgerald Toussaint	MICH
23.	Cameron Marshall	AZST
24.	Ka'Deem Carey	ARZ
25.	Andre Ellington	CLEM
26.	Cierre Wood	ND
27.	Chris Nwoke	COST
28.	Perry Jones	VA
29.	Michael Holmes	VATC
30.	Isi Sofele	CAL
31.	Jawon Chisholm	AKRN
32.	Christine Michael	TXAM
33.	Isaiah Crowell	GA
34.	Malcolm Brown	TEX
35.	D.J. Harper	BOST
36.	Lyle McCombs	UCONN
37.	Kedrick Rhodes	FIU
38.	Kerwynn Williams	UTST
39.	Stefphon Jefferson	NEV
40.	Silas Redd	PSU

WIDE RECEIVERS

1.	Robert Woods	USC
2.	Marquess Wilson	WAST
3.	Sammy Watkins	CLEM
4.	Nick Harwell	MIOH
5.	Darrin Moore	TXTC
6.	Stedman Bailey	WVU
7.	Keenan Allen	CAL
8.	Justin Hunter	TENN
9.	Tavon Austin	WVU
10.	Marqise Lee	USC
11.	Kenny Stills	OKLA
12.	Quinton Patton	LATC
13.	Darius Johnson	SMU
14.	Terrance Williams	BAY
15.	Josh Boyce	TCU
16.	Rashad Greene	FSU
17.	Ryan Swope	TXAM
18.	Da'Rick Rogers	TENN
19.	Tevin Reese	BAY
20.	Javone Lawson	LALF
21.	Bernard Reedy	TOL
22.	Titus Davis	CMCH
23.	Markus Wheaton	ORST
24.	Cody Hoffman	BYU
25.	Cobi Hamilton	ARK
26.	Dewayne Peace	HOU
27.	Daniel Spencer	HOU
28.	Eric Monette	WMCH
29.	Josh Schaffer	WMCH
30.	Tracy Moore	OKST
31.	Kristoff Williams	WAST
32.	Josh Jarboe	AKST
33.	Taylor Stockemer	AKST
34.	Justin Hardy	ECU
35.	Eric Ward	TXTC
36.	Keenan Davis	IOWA
37.	Jaxon Shipley	TEX
38.	DeAndre Hopkins	CLEM
39.	Eric Thomas	TROY
40.	Aaron Dobson	MARSH

1. **THERE ARE TOO MANY TEAMS!**
124 FBS teams is a lot to keep track of... but you don't need to use them all! You can set up your league any way that you like. Choose to play with only the major-conference schools and you can focus on the players that are on TV and in the news. An SEC-only league would be perfect if you listen to Paul Finebaum and don't want to deal with the other 110 teams that are pretending to vie for a national championship. Did you go to school at Boston College, but live in Oregon? Maybe you can find some guys to join a Pac-12/ACC league...the possibilities are endless.

2. **I HAVE TO DO ALL THE SCORING BY HAND!**
There are several league management systems available on the web that will do all the work for you, and most are free. You can use standard fantasy football scoring or you can create your own system. The best part: college players score lots of points!

3. **YOU CAN'T USE REAL PLAYER NAMES!**
Of course you can! The fact that Cam Newton led a number of fantasy teams to a championship season in 2010 didn't threaten his eligibility to play college football. The fact that college fantasy footballers around the country turned his stats into fantasy points didn't break any laws.

4. **TEAMS DON'T PLAY A BALANCED SCHEDULE, SO IT'S NOT A FAIR COMPETITION!**
This one is a little trickier. It's true that some leagues are tougher than others and some schools pad the schedule with Slippery Rock University. A little preparation before your fantasy draft can help you work the schedule to your advantage. Or, you can create a penalty (say 25%) for playing weak competition.

5. **IT'S TOO HARD TO FIND NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGE PLAYERS!**
All the information you need is available at www.cffinsider.com ... We'll see you there!

TIGHT ENDS

1.	Tyler Eifert	ND
2.	Gavin Escobar	SDST
3.	Austin Seferian-Jenkins	WASH
4.	Ryan Otten	SJST
5.	Joe Fauria	UCLA
6.	Jacob Pedersen	WIS
7.	Jack Doyle	WKTY
8.	Chris Gragg	ARK
9.	Dion Sims	MIST
10.	C.J. Fiedorowicz	IOWA
11.	Colt Lyerla	ORE
12.	Philip Lutzenkirchen	AUB
13.	Blake Jackson	OKST
14.	Crocket Gillmore	COST
15.	Brandon Ford	CLEM
16.	Jake Stoneburner	OSU
17.	Zach Ertz	STAN
18.	Levine Toilolo	STAN
19.	Gabe Linehan	BOST
20.	Holden Huff	BOST

KICKERS

1.	Quinn Sharp	OKST
2.	Chandler Catanzaro	CLEM
3.	Matt Weller	OHIO
4.	Zach Hocker	ARK
5.	Dustin Hopkins	FSU
6.	Tyler Bitancurt	WVU
7.	Michael Hunnicutt	OKLA
8.	Matt Sims	NIU
9.	Drew Alleman	LSU
10.	Brett Maher	NEB
11.	Brian Davis	AKST
12.	Aaron Jones	BAY
13.	Alejandro Maldonado	ORE
14.	Matt Hogan	HOU
15.	Jeremy Shelley	ALA
16.	Jack Griffin	FIU
17.	Brandon McManus	TEMP
18.	Anthony Cantele	KNST
19.	Dan Conroy	MIST
20.	Kevin Harper	PITT

DEFENSE

1.	LSU	LSU
2.	Alabama	ALA
3.	Georgia	GA
4.	Florida	FLA
5.	Michigan State	MIST
6.	Virginia Tech	VATC
7.	Ohio State	OSU
8.	Florida State	FSU
9.	Florida International	FIU
10.	Oregon	ORE
11.	Rutgers	RUT
12.	South Carolina	SOCAR
13.	NC State	NCST
14.	Oklahoma State	OKST
15.	Cincinnati	CIN
16.	Connecticut	UCONN
17.	Texas	TEX
18.	Arkansas State	AKST
19.	Louisiana Tech	LATC
20.	Utah	UTAH

A LOOK BACK

5 Years Ago: 2007

In quite a year, LSU was amazingly resilient, becoming the first team to overcome two defeats to win the national championship. Despite *two* triple-overtime losses, everything else that needed to happen fell into place — including three teams above LSU losing their last games, and the Tigers beating Tennessee in the SEC title game. By the time they got to New Orleans, nothing was going to faze this team ... especially not Ohio State's early 10-0 lead. LSU rolled to 31 consecutive points en route to a 38-24 victory and its second BCS title in five years.

FINAL AP TOP 5

1. LSU (12-2)
2. Georgia (11-2)
3. Southern California (11-2)
4. Missouri (12-2)
5. Ohio State (11-2)

HEISMAN TROPHY

1. Tim Tebow, QB, Florida
2. Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas
3. Colt Brennan, QB, Hawaii
4. Chase Daniel, QB, Missouri

10 Years Ago: 2002

Miami spent almost the whole season ranked No. 1, and the Hurricanes were a heavy favorite heading into the BCS Championship Game at the Fiesta Bowl. Ohio State kept pace as the only other major undefeated team, but the Buckeyes were hardly spectacular. After all, while Miami was destroying opponent after opponent, OSU was advancing through the Big Ten with defense and a ball-control offense, led by their precocious freshman RB Maurice Clarett.

Yet, the Fiesta Bowl was one of the most exciting championship-deciding games ever, with the double-digit underdogs tying the score late, then getting a controversial pass interference penalty to go their way at the end of the first overtime ... and finally shocking Miami in double-overtime, 31-24.

FINAL AP TOP 5

1. Ohio State (14-0)
2. Miami (12-1)
3. Georgia (13-1)
4. Southern California (11-2)
5. Oklahoma (12-2)

HEISMAN TROPHY

1. Carson Palmer, QB, Southern California
2. Brad Banks, QB, Iowa
3. Larry Johnson, RB, Penn State
4. Willis McGahee, RB, Miami

15 Years Ago: 1997

In the last year before the BCS began, Michigan and Nebraska completed undefeated seasons and shared the national championship. For the Cornhuskers, it was the third fat ring for Tom Osborne in a remarkable four-year run, as Scott Frost and a dominant defense dispatched Tennessee in the Orange Bowl, 42-17.

For Michigan, it was a very different ride, as the Wolverines captured their first national title in 50 years (first for the Big Ten since 1968). Lloyd Carr's team used a sensational defense, led by do-everything Charles Woodson, and a whatever-it-takes offense. They outlasted upstart Pac-10 champ Washington State in the Rose Bowl, 21-16. Woodson became the first predominantly defensive player to win the Heisman Trophy, edging Tennessee's Peyton Manning in one of the closest and most surprising votes ever.

FINAL AP TOP 5

1. Michigan (12-0)
2. Nebraska (13-0)
3. Florida State (11-1)
4. Florida (10-2)
5. UCLA (10-2)

HEISMAN TROPHY

1. Charles Woodson, DB-WR-RS, Michigan
2. Peyton Manning, QB, Tennessee
3. Ryan Leaf, QB, Washington State
4. Randy Moss, WR, Marshall

20 Years Ago: 1992

Gino Torretta

Photo by US PRESSWIRE

The Crimson Tide of coach Gene Stallings had been wholly overlooked all season in favor of 1991 national co-champions Washington and Miami. But all Alabama did was win — all the way to the national championship. Once the Tide got the chance to face the Hurricanes and their 29-game winning streak in the national title showdown in the Sugar Bowl, Alabama was almost perfect in a 34-13 rout.

The Tide did it mostly with defense, with bookend defensive ends John Copeland and Eric Curry ... and a secondary stocked with stars like Antonio Langham, Sam Shade and George Teague. Florida State finished No. 2 as part of what would become one of the greatest streaks in college football history — 14 consecutive AP top 5 finishes (1987-2000).

FINAL AP TOP 5

1. Alabama (13-0)
2. Florida State (11-1)
3. Miami (11-1)
4. Notre Dame (10-1-1)
5. Michigan (9-0-3)

HEISMAN TROPHY

1. Gino Torretta, QB, Miami
2. Marshall Faulk, RB, San Diego State
3. Garrison Hearst, RB, Georgia
4. Marvin Jones, LB, Florida State

25 Years Ago: 1987

In one of the most highly anticipated college football games in decades, No. 2 Miami faced its fifth Top 10 opponent of the season — top-ranked Oklahoma. Barry Switzer's Sooners, meantime, had laid waste to a succession of foes and charged into the Orange Bowl after a season-ending 17-7 victory over top-ranked Nebraska.

Yet, the Hurricanes roster — and coaching staff (Jimmy Johnson, Dave Wannstedt, Butch Davis, Dave Campo, Gary Stevens, Art Kehoe) — was well-stocked with future NFL talent. Miami amazingly had dealt the Sooners their only defeats in the previous two seasons. And for the third year in a row, Miami prevailed, overcoming OU, 20-14, and getting big games from running back Melvin Bratton and linebacker Bernard Clark.

FINAL AP TOP 5

1. Miami (12-0)
2. Florida State (11-1)
3. Oklahoma (11-1)
4. Syracuse (11-0-1)
5. LSU (10-1-1)

HEISMAN TROPHY

1. Tim Brown, WR-RS, Notre Dame
2. Don McPherson, QB, Syracuse
3. Gordie Lockbaum, DB, Holy Cross
4. Lorenzo White, RB, Michigan State

50 Years Ago: 1962

Back when the final polls were taken before the bowl games, two teams finished with perfect records — USC (10-0) and Mississippi (9-0). Yet, Big Ten champion Wisconsin vaulted into the No. 2 spot, which set up the first No. 1-No. 2 bowl matchup ever ... in the Rose Bowl, no less. The result was one of the great shootouts ever, with Badger Ron Vander Kelen passing for a record 401 yards in a losing effort as John McKay's Trojans held on to win, 42-37. This would be the first of McKay's four national championships (1962, 1967, 1972, 1974).

FINAL AP TOP 5

1. Southern California (11-0)
2. Wisconsin (10-2)
3. Mississippi (10-0)
4. Texas (9-0-1)
5. Alabama (10-1)

HEISMAN TROPHY

1. Terry Baker, QB, Oregon State
2. Jerry Stovall, RB, LSU
3. Bobby Bell, T, Minnesota
4. Leroy Jordan, C, Alabama

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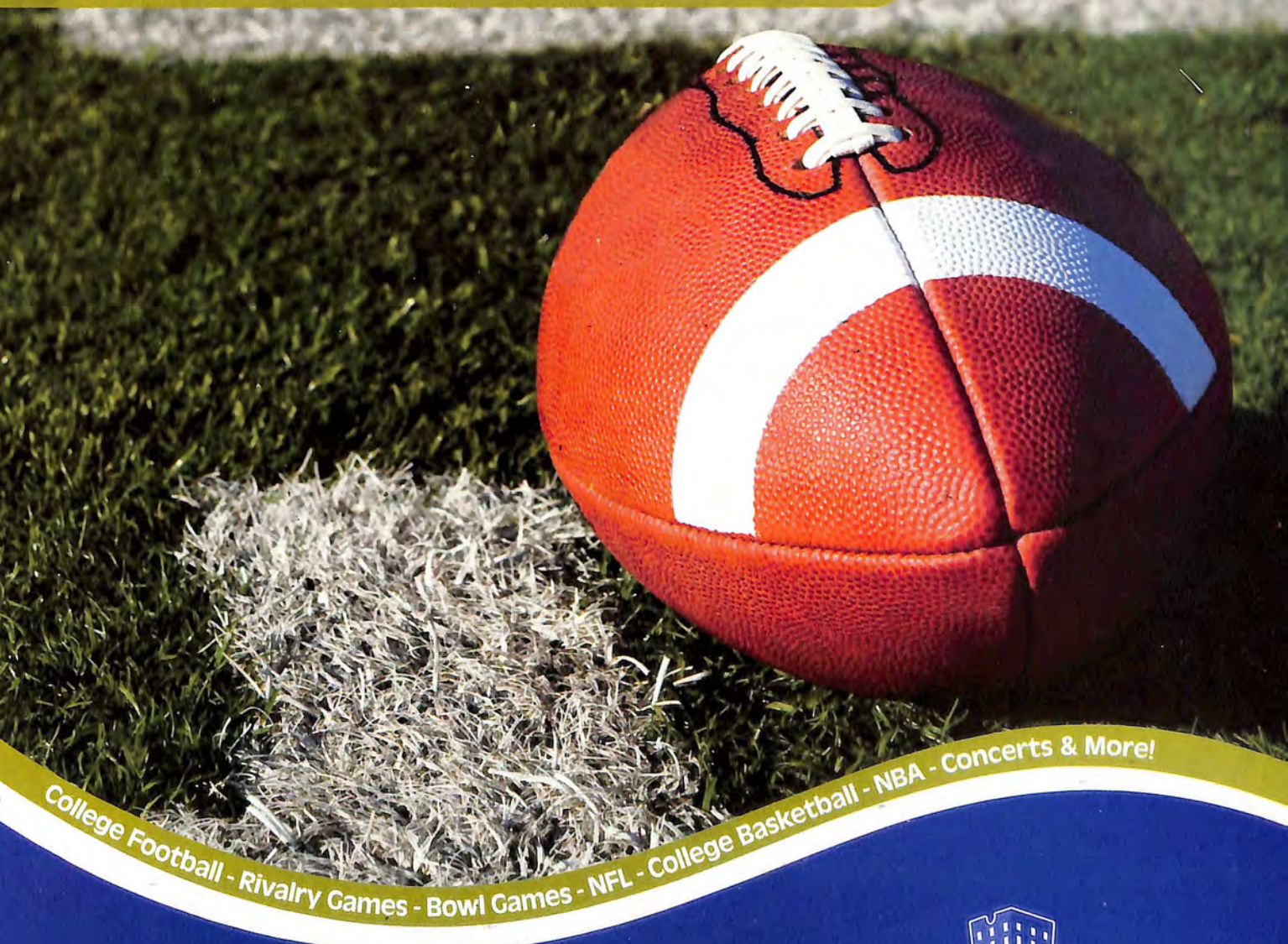

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